Fun and Facts About American Business: An Animated Education in the Free Enterprise System

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Abstract

This thesis examines themes of American conservatism in the years 1930 – 1950, with a focus on the politics of FDR's New Deal and pro-free enterprise ideology. Its findings coincide with a growing historiography that argues that conservative activism, particularly in the form of corporate-evangelical partnerships, surfaced in the 1930s, and not in the 1980s as scholars have previously asserted. It is clear from existing evidence that corporate conservatives and right-wing evangelicals worked together to attempt to reverse the economic policies of Roosevelt's administration and salvage the reputation of the free enterprise system during the Great Depression and into the postwar period. Public relations campaigns were at the core of their efforts, culminating in an abundance of corporate-sponsored educational films that stressed conservative notions of Americanism.

By utilising methodologies drawn from history, film, and cultural studies, this thesis will determine the success of Alfred Sloan and George Benson's educational film series, *Fun and Facts About American Business*. It will expand upon existing ground-breaking studies on the relationship between business and religion yet question why scholars have neglected the efforts of two highly influential figures. Sloan and Benson rose to prominence during the 1930s and were instrumental in disseminating pro-American propaganda during the period under examination. Their reputation enabled *Fun and Facts* to surpass the popularity of previously released corporate films and reach national audiences. The series is a significant, yet overlooked, example of how the struggle against liberalism contributed to the power of conservative activism in the decades following the Second World War.

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My gratitude also extends to the staff at Harding University's Brackett Library, particularly Hannah Wood. Without her, I would have been stranded at Little Rock airport with no idea how to get to Searcy. She was not lying when she told me it was in the middle of nowhere. Hannah's expertise in the archive has been indispensable. This thesis could not have been completed without her continued support and guidance in navigating the impressive collections within the archives – and her very quick responses to my late, panicked emails when I wasn't able to locate specific sources in the mountain of photographs I had collected. I was welcomed to Brackett Library like a close friend and will always be grateful for their hospitality.

On a personal note, I would not have been able to get through the past three years without the care and support of my loving partner, Jeremy. He has had to put up with a string of tantrums and frustrating episodes, as well as listen to a range of topics that make no sense to him whatsoever (the bane of being a

psychologist and not a historian). Now this journey is coming to an end, I'm sure he'll be pleased he no longer has to entertain two very hyperactive cats by himself.

I would also like to thank my closest friend, Sophie, for her support throughout this degree. Like Jeremy, she has also had to listen to me over the past three years and has been forever patient. Lastly, I am incredibly grateful for the continued support of my previous supervisor, Prof. Matthew Feldman. He has become a good friend over the years and has sent numerous academic opportunities my way. His belief in my ability has never faltered.

Candidate Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 26 May 2017.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 80,310.

Name: Natasha Neary

Signature:

Date: 28 October 2018

Introduction

In 1946, a small conservative Christian college situated in the foothills of the Ozark mountains in Searcy, Arkansas, ventured into the realm of educational films. Its flagship production, the *Fun and Facts about American Business* series, represented an alliance between Harding College President George Benson and the chairman and CEO of General Motors, Alfred Sloan. Their partnership is a fine example of the collaboration between business and white evangelical religion in twentieth century America. The study of such partnerships is an evolving field positioned at the core of this thesis. During the 1930s, these two forces came together to defend their own brand of Americanism – faith in God, constitutional government, and private enterprise – against the interventionist policies of President Roosevelt's administration.[1] Recent studies by scholars such as Kevin Kruse, Darren Grem, and Timothy Gloege have added to the growing historiography of corporate-evangelical alliances by exploring the response of conservative Americans to the emergence of the New Deal.[2] Their research provides a valuable insight into the propaganda tactics of these anti-New Dealers. Sources for such studies

[1] Throughout this thesis, the term Americanism will be defined by the three components of faith in God, constitutional government, and the free enterprise system. The free enterprise system may also be referred to as 'private enterprise.'

[2] Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), and Darren Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). These studies have added to the growing historiography of corporate-evangelical alliances. They differ, however, in their assertion that these partnerships can be traced back to as early as the 1920s and were not a product, as previous research concluded, of the postwar period. On the latter, see Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009) and Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

include an accumulated wealth of materials: an array of films, radio programs, pamphlets, advertisements, and public speaking engagements.

As vital as these studies are, however, there is still much to be examined. It is understandable that scholars have not covered every relationship forged between business and religion, given the magnitude of the topic, yet the lack of research on Sloan and Benson is a significant oversight. Sloan, for instance, was a leading financial backer of national anti-New Deal propaganda. Instead of contributing to the campaign publicly, GM's giant chose to donate substantial sums of money to those willing to stand up to the New Deal. Groups ranging from the National Association of Manufactures to the American Liberty League benefited from his largess, often receiving $10,000 per donation. Sloan's efforts were magnified through the actions of his self-titled philanthropic organisation, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Although the foundation would later become a leader in scientific development and education, the organisation was initially avowedly partisan and focused its efforts on disseminating pro-free enterprise propaganda.[3] To avoid criticism, its director, Harold S. Sloan, claimed the economic-based research institute sought to bombard 'the American mind with elementary economic principles,' though he assured the public that the foundation had 'no particular economic

[3] The vision of the Sloan Foundation has evolved over time; from the ardent right-wing and pro-free enterprise stance of its founder to a leader in scientific development. The main aim of the current foundation is to provide grants to support original research in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and economics. Today, many Americans will recognise the institute for its role in PBS' NOVA series. The 'Public Understanding of Science and Technology' program provided generous grants to the series. See, 'About Us,' *Alfred P. Sloan Foundation* [https://sloan.org], accessed 25 October 2015 and 'Alfred P. Sloan Foundation,' *NOVA: PBS* [https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/funders/sloan.html], accessed 25 October 2018.

philosophy to promulgate.'[4] However, as film historian Dan Streible argues, the foundation was anything but neutral.[5] In the immediate post-Second World War era, Alfred Sloan's organisation formed a contract with George Benson's Harding College. Together, the two embarked on an ambitious animated series to educate the public on the workings of the free enterprise system; one of the three pillars that defined conservative notions of Americanism. The Sloan Foundation devoted large sums of money to the *Fun and Facts* series. It allocated an impressive $80,000 per cartoon.

There are several reasons why research has lagged on Sloan and his pro-free enterprise propaganda activities. Though not secret, his funding campaigns went largely unnoticed at the time. As an intensely private man, Sloan elected to support business interests from the backbenches to avoid damaging the reputation of his corporation. It was not often that the public was offered an insight into his personal political actions. On the other hand, scholarly oversight concerning Benson is surprising. Benson's humble beginnings as a Christian missionary in China paved the way for his transformation into one of America's leading religious activists. After suffering at the hands of China's United Front Alliance, a coalition of Nationalist and Communists forces, Benson returned to the US dismayed with the situation that plagued his home country. The Great Depression and consequent New Deal had disrupted the natural order. Through his eyes, the public now relied

[4] Quote by Harold S. Sloan, cited in Caroline Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series,' *Enterprise & Society* 16:3 (2015), p. 497.
[5] Dan Streible, 'The Failure of the NYU Educational Film Institute,' in *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States*, eds. Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 271 – 294.

on government handouts whilst it blamed big business for the ills of the nation. In response, Benson rushed to the aid of the supposedly beleaguered free enterprise system and began a nation-wide campaign in support of the business community. Capitalism, he believed, was intrinsically linked to Christianity as the two represented the foundations of American heritage.[6] In the 1940s and 1950s, Benson's ideology resonated with influential businessmen, many of whom donated substantial sums of money to both Benson's campaign and his college. What ensued was a barrage of radio broadcasts, newspaper columns, and public speaking engagements that disseminated Benson's opinions to large national audiences. The momentum he garnered continued into the postwar period with the release of the *Fun and* Facts series and defined Benson as a leading advocate of private enterprise.

Benson's story, as well as his influence on American conservatism, is documented in the works of L. Edward Hicks and John Stevens.[7] Though impressive in their scope and detail, these publications are the only substantial

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[6] L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), p. xxii. Kruse argues that this was also the view of many like-minded, right-wing religious leaders. See, Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, p. 8. Such ideas were then promoted later in the century by the likes of televangelist Jerry Falwell. See, Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist, Language, and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[7] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt'* and John C. Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing: The Story of George S. Benson* (Searcy, AR: Harding University Press, 1991). There are wider studies on American business and religion that provide information on Benson, though these are brief in their scope. For a leading example, see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011). Despite the lack of publications on Benson, Robbie Maxwell's recent dissertation, together with this work, offers new opportunities for the field. Like previous studies, however, Maxwell provides only a brief overview of the *Fun and Facts* series. See, Robbie Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation: George S. Benson and Modern American Conservatism' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015).

pieces on Benson and are now outdated. Since the 1990s, the archive at Harding College has been organised and expanded with the introduction of additional materials. Consequently, both Hick's and Steven's accounts have inaccuracies, if only minor, due to misplaced or new sources. Their studies also contain few details on the production and release of the *Fun and Facts* series; a startling omission. Similarly, David Farber has produced a noteworthy biography of Alfred Sloan.[8] His work chronicles Sloan's life from his early beginnings as a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to his business activities following the Second World War. However, the collaboration between the Sloan Foundation and Harding College is, yet again, noticeably absent.

This thesis aims to build upon the existing work of Hicks, Stevens, and Farber and fill the scholarly gap concerning the ambitious, technically advanced, and remarkably expensive, animated production of *Fun and Facts*. Doing so will shed light on a significant corporate-evangelical alliance and demonstrate the pair's own interpretations of Americanism in response to domestic policies. The series will also be put into the larger perspective of the American right, so influential in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The *Fun and Facts* series itself consists of ten animated shorts, running at approximately ten minutes each. It was produced by ex-Disney employee John Sutherland through his self-titled production studios in Los Angeles, California between 1948 and 1951. The cartoons he created were expertly stylised and utilised the most modern animation techniques in the industry,

[8] David Farber, *Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

most notably the use of Technicolour. Through the use of carefully crafted drawings and enhanced colours, the *Fun and Facts* cartoons attempted to appeal to both adults and children alike in order to preach Sloan and Benson's free market principles to the widest audience possible. Furthermore, having a producer previously associated with Disney was ideal for Sloan's desire to implement what he labelled the 'Disney effect' in which the cartoons employed a similar style and structure throughout the series, together with the appearance of reoccurring characters. Each of the ten shorts concentrated on a particular aspect of the free enterprise system, covering the subjects in depth to provide viewers with what the team believed was a much needed education in American economics. The subjects were then linked to the wider importance of the free enterprise system to the nation. In doing so, Sloan and Benson hoped the series would help to reinstate the pre-Depression reputation of big business and showcase what they believed made America 'the finest place in the world to live.'[9]

The deeper context of this thesis explores a variety of themes pertinent to modern American history. Although *Fun and Facts* did not enter production until 1946, the conditions for its release can be traced back to the 1930s. Some of these points of conflict and tension even date back to the 1920s. The emerging corporate-evangelical alliances clearly formed in response to FDR's New Deal. Mutual interests rallied big business after the economic success of the roaring twenties. As Kim Phillips-Fein notes, the decade before the

[9] This quote was placed on the opening slide of every *Fun and Facts* cartoon and explains the team's desire to 'create a deeper understanding of what has made America the finest place in the world to live.' To them, this was first and foremost the free enterprise system. A visual of this slide can be found in 'Why Play Leapfrog?,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7BjO65--JE&t=171s].

Depression was considered an 'employer's paradise', a time when business leaders stood as the heroes of American prosperity.[10] When the public demanded new consumer goods, industry dutifully obliged by producing an abundance of commodities to a mass market driven by high purchasing power. Though not every American benefitted from the growing prosperity, the lucky participants in this consumer culture propelled business leaders to new heights. Under such circumstances, the demand for labour unions decreased and ultimately eliminated organised opposition to corporate practices. Acknowledging the position of the business community during this period of affluence is necessary in order to understand the significance of its fall with the onset of the Depression, as well as its subsequent recovery. In looking for someone to blame for the economic crisis, the public turned against big business. This was not wholly unjustified given the poor response of conservatives to economic crises. The downturn, business leaders believed, was yet another cyclical glitch. If left alone, the economy would return to its pre-1930 state of prosperity within a couple of years. However, such assurances rang hollow for many Americans.

The Depression persisted deep into the 1930s. As the business community refused to accept responsibility and played down the crisis, its

[10] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, p. 6. For an overview on the American economy during the 1920s, see David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929 – 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Phillip G. Payne, *Crash! How the Economic Boom and Bust of the 1920s Worked* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920 – 1939: Decades of Promise and Pain* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), James Grant, *The Forgotten Depression, 1921: The Crash That Cured Itself* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), Thomas K. McCraw and William R. Childs, *American Business Since 1920: How it Worked* third edition (Medford, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018), and Peter James George, *The Emergence of Industrial America: Strategic Factors in American Economic Growth Since 1870* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).

reputation continued to deteriorate. In response, the nation chose to elect a president willing to tackle the problem with new initiatives. Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in late 1932 marked a turning point for corporate conservatives. In 1933, the government's interventionist New Deal policies set business leaders on a frenzy of public relations campaigns as they rushed to defend the free enterprise system. Notable companies such as E.I. du Pont, General Electric, and General Motors, as well as larger organisations like the NAM, produced a barrage of pro-business propaganda. Their message was simple: the government had no place in business and it was under their leadership that America would return to its prosperous past.[11] These efforts were multiplied as New Deal policies continued to be introduced and gained widespread approval. The National Labour Relations Act of 1935 (also referred to as the Wagner Act) caused a particular outcry as the government sought to interfere with relations between management and unions. The backlash from this legislation was unprecedented. The NAM, together with its allies, lobbied against the bill and when this failed, public relations expenditure was increased substantially. The national strike wave of 1937 reinforced corporate fears concerning the diminishing power of big business and the threat of government control of the economy.

[11] For important works on conservative business propaganda during the interwar period, see William Bird, *"Better Living": Advertising, Media, and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership, 1935* – 1955 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk out of Democracy: Corporate Propaganda Versus Freedom and Liberty* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), Inger L. Stole, *Advertising on Trial: Consumer Activism and Corporate Public Relations in the 1930s* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism* (New York: The New York Press, 2015), J. Michael Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Edward L. Bernays, *Public Relations*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).

Sloan, who was already providing large donations to the NAM, personally joined the fight against the New Deal as strike action had a direct impact on GM. His response culminated in the corporation's 1939 educational film, *Round & Round*.[12] This ten-minute animated short utilised stop-motion animation to explain the basic workings of the economy and the importance of the free enterprise system to the wellbeing of the nation. The film symbolised Sloan's disdain for the New Deal and was an early example of pro-free enterprise propaganda. The techniques used in *Round & Round*, coupled with Sloan's desire to protect his economic philosophy from forces that threatened GM's productivity, would later be transferred to the *Fun and Facts* series. The trials and tribulations of 1930s business, therefore, is an important area of exploration when examining the reasons behind Sloan's involvement in Harding's flagship production.

If the role of business constitutes an important element of this work, so too does religion. In the fight against the New Deal, Benson, the Arkansas educator and evangelical, took the side of America's leading corporate conservatives. The success of his career relied on the financial support of these men, who shared his desire to re-educate the public in the workings of the free enterprise system and the importance of big business to the prosperity of the nation. For the business community, the creation of a corporate-evangelical alliance was a blessing. As men of God, their partners could give voice to the same conservative complaints as business leaders, but without suspicion that their actions were motivated solely by self-interest. In doing so,

[12] 'Round & Round,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGqF7PFs-Y4], accessed 3 May 2018.

Benson, together with like-minded religious leaders, produced a new blend of politics, economics, and conservative religion that one observer aptly dubbed 'Christian libertarianism.'[13] Throughout the 1930s, and into the postwar period, their activities reshaped the national debate surrounding the role of federal government, the political influence of corporations, and the role of religion in national life. In aligning with business leaders, Benson and his colleagues, Kruse argues, built a 'foundation for a new vision of America in which businessmen would no longer suffer under the rule of Roosevelt but instead thrive – in a phrase they popularised – in a nation 'Under God.''[14]

In exploring Sloan and Benson's response to the New Deal, it is important to note the radical nature of their conservative ideology. Roosevelt's economic policies were subject to criticisms from across the political spectrum; from disgruntled leftist commentators who argued that the New Deal did not do enough for the disadvantaged, to hard-line, right-wing conservatives who viewed it as an attack on American liberty. To the latter, the New Deal was a threat to economic freedom and marked the beginning of the end of free market principles that exacerbated Sloan and Benson's desire to protect the status quo. However, in reality, the New Deal was not as radical a break with the policy of previous administrations as it has sometimes been viewed. As Kevin E. Schmiesing argues, 'the reformers of the thirties were faced with an economic crisis and their main goal was recovery . . . security for farmers, business, and workers, but he [Roosevelt] did not intend to restructure

[13] Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, p. 7.
[14] Ibid, p. 8. Also, see Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure* in which he describes the emergence of the 'corporate evangelical.'

radically the American economy.'[15] Other scholars, such as Barton Bernstein have focussed on the lack of reform achieved during the 1930s. They distance their arguments from earlier historians that deemed the New Deal revolutionary to claim that Roosevelt naturally sought limited reform within the American political consensus.[16]

Against the backdrop of such studies, it is Sloan and Benson's ideology that appears radical, not the New Deal. Their rhetoric during the 1930s and 40s, together with the groups they chose to align themselves with, reveals a highly charged, and somewhat extreme, reaction to government intervention in the economy. This view was mirrored through public opinion towards big business, particularly in the dismissive response to organisations such as the American Liberty League and the NAM who were often the subject of jokes instigated by the press and more moderate spectators. In religious circles, Benson's position echoed the fears promulgated by Christian doomsayers who associated the changes in American politics to the apocalyptic time-period of the end times, yet another extreme position prescribed to those deemed as radical. Consequently, it is necessary to remember that throughout this thesis, Sloan and Benson's conservative, and decisively anti-New Deal, ideology resonated with groups comprised of like-minded, right-wing individuals, rather than the wider public.

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[15] Kevin E. Schmiesing, *Within The Market Strife: American Catholic Economic Thought from Rerum Novarum to Vatican II* (New York: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 83.

[16] Barton Bernstein, *The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970) and Paul Conkin, *The New Deal* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California, 1992).

The role of religion in the defence of free enterprise also played a significant part to the development of *Fun and Facts*. Therefore, it is important to provide wider context on the nature of Benson's religious affiliation. Much of Benson's early life was dominated by his work as a member of the Churches of Christ. Over the years, the Churches of Christ has divided and subdivided into eight major wings, according to *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*.[17] However, this thesis will concentrate on the mainstream tradition that traces its American heritage to Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell in the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century. Benson aligned himself with this denomination after abandoning the Methodist church upon entering college. He was attracted by the notion of the restoration of primitive Christianity, a defining feature of the Churches of Christ that sought to restore the Christian faith as it was believed to have been practised in the first century. Elements of evangelicalism also spoke to Benson. As defined by George Marsden, the essential evangelical beliefs include:

> (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.[18]

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[17] J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopaedia of American Religions* eight edition (Farmington Hills, MI: Cengage Gale, 2009).

[18] George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 4 – 5. Also, see Roger E. Olsen, *Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 2004), Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals, The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), David Martyn Lloyd Jones, *What is an Evangelical?* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1993), Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Heath W. Carter and Laura Rominger Porter (eds.), *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017.

The importance of evangelism was of particular interest to Benson. He strongly believed in the power of Christian education and devoted much of his life to this cause. During the 1920s, he left the US to work as a missionary in China. His experiences in the Far East shaped his actions on his return to the US a decade later after witnessing the influence of Communism there. Chinese Communism clashed with Benson's view of Americanism, as shared by fellow conservatives. Communism, as far as he was concerned, threatened the US during a time of great economic hardship. Stung by his experiences in the China, Benson quickly came to the conclusion that 'socialism' as he wrongly termed Keynesian economics, 'was already knocking at the nation's front door.'[19] As Leo Ribuffo has observed, right-wing Christians such as Benson deemed Roosevelt's actions 'un-American as well as unwise' and 'routinely compared the whole New Deal to "Russianised government."'[20] In response, Benson initiated a large-scale offensive that aimed to defend the free enterprise system on the one hand, whilst developing Christian education on the other. These two themes became intrinsically linked during his rise as a leading figure of twentieth century conservatism.

It is also useful to note the definition of fundamentalism given the ideological alliance formed between the Churches of Christ and the fundamentalist movement after WWI. In *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, Marsden describes the movement as 'militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism' that found its origins in the revivalist tradition, Common Sense realist philosophy, and a non-Wesleyan branch of the

[19] Quote by Benson, in Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt*,' p. 27.
[20] Leo Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 15.

holiness movement. Its characteristic beliefs include an intense focus on evangelism, the premillennial second coming of Christ, and the absolute authority of the Bible.[21] As one of the most influential books in American religious history, Marsden's work has, according to Matthew Sutton, 'carried the day for so long.'[22] In the last few years, however, a series of new books have surfaced that seek to overturn Marsden's consensus. New definitions introduced by Sutton and Gloege provide a meaning of fundamentalism that aligns far more closely to Benson's idea of Americanism. According to Sutton, 'fundamentalism, far from being a backwards-looking reaction to religious modernism, was instead just another variant of modernist faith. Adherents, just as ambitiously as their liberal counterparts, sought to shape a Christianity that represented and spoke to the needs of its time. Furthermore, the Christianity they developed was not a sectarian and isolationist faith, but one that sought to transform the United States in every way – from politics to social issues to mass media to religion.'[23] Gloege elaborates on this, arguing that the core leadership of the early fundamentalist movement was profoundly influenced by modern business. As well as being decidedly urban and ideologically

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[21] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* new edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 4. Other notable works on fundamentalism include Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800 – 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), David S. New, *Christian Fundamentalism in America: A Cultural History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2012), Douglas Carl Abrams, *Selling the Old-Time Religion: American Fundamentalism and Mass Culture, 1920 – 1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), and Kenneth J. Collins, *Power, Politics, and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism: From the Scopes Trial to the Obama Administration* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

[22] Matthew Avery Sutton, 'New Trends in the Historiography of American Fundamentalism,' *The Journal of American Studies* 51:1 (2017), pp. 240 – 241.

[23] Ibid.

aligned with the professional and elite bourgeoisie, fundamentalists were also early adopters of modern corporate organisation and marketing strategies for religious ends.[24] Benson's Americanist ideals concerning business and religion, as well as his engagement with modern technology to disseminate his faith, placed him firmly within the fundamentalist camp. Facets of Marsden's definition are applicable to Benson, most notably the focus on evangelism and the absolute authority of the Bible, yet recent studies provide a profound explanation to the role of fundamentalism in business and economic propaganda. The *Fun and Facts* series is a fine example of how fundamentalists, like Benson, utilised modern strategies that enabled them to become powerful social actors in a changing society.

Within the context of corporate-evangelical partnerships, the larger theme of American conservatism is particularly noteworthy. The first half of this thesis will explore the decline of conservative power, as well as its response to a changing political landscape, through the lens of business and religion. For this, the New Deal remains central to the narrative as the rise of a liberal state, the expansion of labour unions, and the rejection of laissez-faire economics gave rise to conservative agitation. The state of the Republican Party amid Roosevelt's four presidential elections for the Democrats is, of course, worth a mention. However, it is the actions of corporate leaders and religious activists that will take centre stage. The organisational forces of the American Liberty League and the NAM provide an insight into the propaganda techniques used by right-wing businessmen in an effort to combat the New Deal, as well as their decision to enlist the aid of

[24] Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, p. 14.

prominent evangelicals. Yet, despite the support of some of the nation's leading figures, their efforts were dismissed with cries of self-interest. During the 1930s, conservatives failed to organise politically against the New Deal.[25]

The fortunes of American conservatism changed dramatically following the Second World War. On the political front, the strong performance of conservative candidates in the electoral field helped revive the moribund movement. In the 1946 midterm elections, the Republicans recaptured the majority of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1930, breaking sixteen years of Democratic control. This coincided with the drastic decline of Truman's approval rating in response to his actions towards the 1945-46 strike wave. In primarily siding with employers and threatening to draft strikers into the military, Truman's rating fell from 63 percent at the beginning of 1946 to an abysmal 27 per cent in October, a month before the midterm election.[26] In control of Congress, the Republicans chipped away at the New Deal and passed legislation beneficial to big business. The most notable of these was the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. The passing of this legislation was a direct attack on the Wagner Act and restricted the activities and power of labour unions. It was a remarkable win for the business community which, for the first time since the Depression, was optimistic about its future.

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[25] For 1930s conservatism, see George Wolfskill, *The Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League, 1934–1940* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933–1939* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1967), Robert F. Burk, *The Corporate State and the Broker State: The Du Ponts and American National Politics, 1925-1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), and Gregory L. Schneider (ed.), *Conservatism in America Since 1930: A Reader* (New York, New York University Press, 2003).

[26] 'Presidential Job Approval,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=33], accessed 30 July 2018.

Hope for the revival of corporate America was further aided by the anti-Communist crusade of the Cold War. Truman's 1947 'Loyalty Order', an act that required federal employees to be screened for possible association with subversive activities, paved the way for the Red Scare and the witch hunts conducted by conservative Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Against this hostile political backdrop, business leaders reignited their fight of the 1930s to defend the free enterprise system against continuing threats from liberals and the left. The resurgence of American conservatism bolstered their efforts.[27]

As the *Fun and Facts* series was, first and foremost, an educational production, it is essential to note the importance of film and its relation to the deeper context of this thesis. Here, the term 'educational' is used in a broad sense to encompass films that were made to teach, inform, instruct, or persuade viewers in a variety of ways and contexts. Most nontheatrical films of the twentieth century fall into this category and may be referred to elsewhere as industrial films, training films, sponsored productions, or even propaganda pieces. An estimated 300,000 educational pictures have been made in the

[27] Notable work on postwar conservatism includes, Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time For Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement, 1945 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right at the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), Sean P. Cunningham, *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Alan Brinkley, 'The Problem of American Conservatism,' *The American Historical Review* 99:2 (1994), pp. 409 – 429, Donald T. Critchlow, 'Rethinking American Conservatism: Toward a New Narrative,' *Journal of American History* 98: 3 (2011), pp. 752 – 755, Kim Phillips-Fein, 'Conservatism: A State of the Field,' *Journal of American History* 98:3 (2011), pp. 723 – 743.

US, making it the largest film genre to date.[28] Accompanying these films was a large collection of how-to literature, mainly consisting of a range of academic journals aimed to promote the medium to sponsors, educators, and film producers. Despite the vast body of source material, these films constitute a neglected aspect of film studies and film history. For years, nontheatrical productions have been overshadowed by their cinematic counterparts. As instructional pieces, they lack the aesthetic appeal, fictional narratives, and technological innovation used to attract attention. As Elizabeth Ellsworth notes, 'as long as debates about auteurs, aesthetics, popularity, and filmic enunciation dominated media studies, the highly formulaic, seemingly banal styles and structures of educational media . . . ensured their marginalisation.'[29] This preconception hindered any serious research into educational films until the 1990s.

The past two decades have seen a significant increase in the study of nontheatrical productions. Most notably, Anthony Slide's *Before Video* (1992) provides an in-depth look at the use of 16mm films in American institutions, complete with appendices providing information on distributors from 1920 to 1940. This paved the way for further research, culminating in works such as Charles Acland's and Haidee Wasson's *Useful Cinema* (2011) and Devin Orgeron, et al., *Learning with the Lights Off* (2011).[30] Similarly, film archivist

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[28] Rick Prelinger, *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006), p. vi

[29] Elizabeth Ellsworth and Mariamne Whatley, *The Ideology of Images in Educational Media: Hidden Curriculums in the Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), p. 2.

[30] Historiography on nontheatrical films steadily increased after the publication of Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of the Non-Theatrical Film* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992). Notable works include, Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films 1945 – 1970* (New York: Blast Books, 1999), Elizabeth Wiatr, 'Between Word, Image, and the Machine: Visual Education and Films of Industrial

Rick Prelinger has dedicated much of his time arguing for the cultural and historical significance of nontheatrical films, publishing *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* in 2007. These influential studies are bringing educational films to the foreground of film studies and film history. Prelinger's own collection of 50,000 books, periodicals, and pieces of print ephemera and the 60,000 films he donated to the Library of Congress are supporting these advancements.[31]

Through these studies, a narrative on the developments of twentieth century educational films unfolds. For the purpose of this thesis, these developments will be explored through the industrial productions funded by anti-New Deal corporate giants such as Sloan, the du Ponts, and the NAM. The success of industrial sponsored films, as well as the genre of educational films in general, was hindered by the negative publicity the business community received during the Depression. The pro-free enterprise messages conveyed in features like Republic Steel's *Steel: A Symphony of Industry* (1936) and Chevrolet's *From Dawn to Sunset* (1937) were dismissed as acts of self-interest.[32] As researcher F. Dean McClusky found, critics thought such productions were full of 'commercialism, low moral tone, propaganda or controversial issues.' These unsatisfactory pictures, he continued, were 'found to be so numerous that the good ones suffered from

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Practice,' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22 (2002), Orgeron et al, *Learning with the Lights Off*, and Charles R Acland and Haidee Wasson (ed.), *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). Slide's work also inspired the Orphan Film Symposium, established in 1999 by Dan Streible.

[31] 'Rick and Megan Prelinger,' *KQED* [https://ww2.kqed.org/forum/2009/05/14/richard-and-megan-prelinger/], accessed 29 September 2017.

[32] 'Steel: A Symphony of Industry,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGM5J2nwV90] and 'From Dawn to Sunset,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbeSVmEwBMk].

being too frequently found in bad company.'[33] Yet, in subsequent years, educational films gained a newfound respectability.

The turning point for educational films came with the onset of the Second World War as America's entry into the conflict caused a boom in the production of nontheatrical features. Filmmakers produced movies to instruct, inform, sell, inspire, convince, and unite. They were serious, entertaining, enlightening, but above all, blatant propaganda. Their success was aided by a nation of moviegoers that viewed the thousands of propaganda films routinely shown before the main feature they had paid to see. By the end of the war, these patrons were convinced of the benefits of the motion picture as an educational tool. Consequently, the demand for educational films in the postwar period was unprecedented. The war had created a desire for film and every possible venue of film exhibition was equipped with a 16mm projector. In a 1954 study on the developments of the genre, researcher Paul Wagner reported that the number of 16mm projectors available in communities throughout the country was in the range of 250,000 to 400,000. In addition, 25,000 nontheatrical films were produced in the first seven years after 1945; this total surmounted to only 500 before the war.[34] Postwar America, therefore, provided the perfect conditions for the production of an animated economic series.

In regard to existing historiography, there is a vast body of literature on the themes central to this thesis, as well as the overarching contexts of

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[33] Abstract from McClusky's 1937 report, in Paul Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 1990), pp. 106 – 107.

[34] Film Council of America, *Sixty Years of 16mm Film, 1923 – 1983: A Symposium* (Evanston, IL: Film Council of America, 1954), p. 12.

interwar and postwar America. The 1930s - with the economic collapse and subsequent Depression, the introduction of the New Deal, and the decline of conservatism - is a pivotal moment in business and religious history and has generated a wealth of scholarship.[35] This thesis will, to a great extent, engage with existing works to explore conservative agitation amid the rise and solidification of the liberal state. Doing so will bring greater understanding of the actions of corporate leaders and religious activists during a time of great upheaval. Though their efforts were unsuccessful in changing public attitudes towards big business, corporate-evangelical allies formed a foundation for conservative activism in the postwar era. The political, economic, and cultural changes instigated by the Second World War provided a lifeline for American business which, together with its religious partners, continued the feuds of the past decade with vigour. As such, literature on the long-1950s, defined as the period from 1945 to 1960, will also be fundamental to this thesis.

Characterised by the revival of conservatism, increased religious engagement, and fervent anti-Communism, this decade provided the backdrop to the *Fun and Facts* series. Therefore, works by scholars such as Godfrey Hodgson, Richard Fried, and Phillips-Fein will provide the much needed context to the era, as will the wider studies of John Patrick Diggins and James T. Patterson.[36] Additionally, the works of Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf

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[35] For notable works, see Gene Smiley, *Rethinking the Great Depression* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labour, and Politics in America, 1920 – 1935* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and James Hoopes, *Corporate Dreams: Big Business in American Democracy from the Great Depression to the Great Recession* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

[36] For an overview of 1950s America, see Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up*, Richard M. Fried, *A Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Kim Phillips-Fein and Julian E. Zelizer (eds.), *What's Good for Business: Business and American Politics since World War II* (New

and Lizabeth Cohen will help to explain the cultural conditions that allowed for the success of conservative propaganda.[37] With the aid of these studies, this thesis will illuminate how the postwar period offered an ideal setting for the *Fun and Facts* series.

From a narrower perspective, historiography concerning the collaboration of business and religion in twentieth century America will be of great importance. Here, the work of Kruse and Grem is indispensable. This thesis supports their arguments that corporate-evangelical links can be traced as far back as the 1920s, changing the perceptions of those such as Bethany Moreton and Phillips-Fein who suggest these partnerships were exclusive to the postwar era. As such, the following work will add to a growing consensus within the field of business and religious history. The arguments within this thesis, however, will not merely regurgitate Kruse, Gloege's, and Grem's arguments, but expand on their work and offer a study on a surprisingly overlooked alliance between two of America's leading figures. The works of Hicks, Stevens, and Farber will provide the biographical details on Sloan and Benson whilst the innumerable sources held within Harding's Ann Cowen Archives & Special Collections library will help to offer new perspectives and missed opportunities on research concerning *Fun and Facts*.

Other scholars, such as Caroline Jack and Robbie Maxwell, are among the few who have provided a brief overview of the *Fun and Facts* series. Their

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York: Oxford University Press, 2012), John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace 1941 – 1960* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), and James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945 – 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[37] Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003).

studies offer interesting, albeit sweeping, thoughts on the project that will contribute to this thesis in several ways. Jack, for example, is highly critical of the series in her article, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series.' Here, she argues that due to rising tensions within the corporate-evangelical alliance, Sloan and Benson failed to produce a successful animated series that appealed to the public due to a lack of balance between education and humour. This thesis will challenge Jack's claim, in its entirety, to show that this was not the case. Although cracks did appear within Sloan and Benson's partnership, these were swiftly remediated through an unwavering, shared dedication to the free enterprise system. Moreover, Maxwell's analysis of Benson as a highly skilful orator and popular figure lends credence to the argument that large swathes of the public were in fact influenced by his teachings, including those broadcasted through the *Fun and Facts* series. Maxwell's study of Benson is valuable, and his findings support this project's main conclusions. This research, alongside that of Maxwell's, provides a new trajectory within the existing historiography of Benson and his National Education Program to argue that, although he was very much a figure of the long-1950s, Benson successfully stood as a prominent defender of the free-enterprise system with *Fun and Facts* representing conservative notions of Americanism following its revival after a damaging period of decline.[38] Unlike Hicks and Stevens, however, these new additions offer a bleaker conclusion to Benson's later life, arguing that there was no place for Benson's radical anti-

[38] Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business,' and Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation.'

New Deal ideology after the fervent anti-anticommunism of the Second Red Scare. Though popular, *Fun and Facts* was very much a project of its time.

Chapter one, Alfred P. Sloan and the Fight Against the New Deal, will focus on the subject of business during the interwar years with a particular emphasis on the actions and opinions of Sloan. Through Sloan, conservative opposition to the New Deal will be explored, as well as responses to government intervention in the economy. Whilst this will rely greatly on existing work concerning anti-New Deal conservative activism, it is vital that the reader has an understanding of corporate propaganda techniques given that it provides the foundation for *Fun and Facts*, the origins of which can be traced back to the 1930s. Sloan's ideological developments here, as elusive as they can be with a lack of private papers and behind-the-scenes contributions, will offer insight into his involvement with Harding's postwar project.

Chapter two, George S. Benson: From Humble Beginnings to a Leader in Christian Education, will follow a similar structure but with a focus on Benson. Here, the emphasis will be placed on the religious side of the corporate-evangelical partnership and explore the actions of Benson in response to the New Deal and his perceived threat of Communism. As with Sloan, Benson's ideology will shed light on his decision to embark on an ambitious economic film series.

Chapter three, A New Era For The Non-Theatrical Film: Producing an Economic Cartoon Series in Postwar America, will provide the turning point to the thesis and introduce *Fun and Facts*, starting with the production process. The contextual backdrop will explain how America's victory in the Second

World War gave rise to a new and thriving consumer culture that helped improve attitudes towards big business. Simultaneously, educational films won a newfound respectability after their effective use as wartime propaganda. In addition to exploring the rise of conservatism, this chapter will explain how the immediate postwar period provided the ideal climate for an anti-New Deal film series. Following this, the *Fun and Facts* production process will be explained, introducing two new, but key, players in the series. The cartoons were produced by ex-Disney animator John Sutherland, a character more elusive than Sloan when it comes to biographical materials. Whilst few details about Sutherland's ideology remain, his correspondences with Sloan and Benson, as well as research provided by online animation journals, suggest a shared ambition for the series. Such sources, though few in number, have been indispensable in deciphering Sutherland's character and work history.[39] Similarly, information concerning Arnold Zurcher, the Sloan Foundation's director, are scarce. Although, his involvement in the series as the organisation's lead signifies his right-wing position. Discussions between these four individuals will highlight the trials and tribulations behind the creation of *Fun and Facts* and reveal telling differences in opinion. Ultimately, the production of the series will determine the success of Sloan and Benson's corporate-evangelical alliance.

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[39] Although Sutherland was a pioneering animator of the postwar era, there is a profound lack of sources on both him and his studio, John Sutherland Productions. Leading sources central to this thesis are the correspondences found in the archives at Harding, as well as the following online animation journals: 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story,' *Hogan's Alley* [http://cartoonician.com/animating-ideas-the-john-sutherland-story/] and 'Animated Propaganda During the Cold War: Part Two,' *Animation World Network* [https://www.awn.com/animationworld/animated-propaganda-during-cold-war-part-two].

Chapter four, Selling Free Enterprise Through Animation, introduces the cartoons within the series. It is important to note that not all of the cartoons are analysed here, only the first six in the series. Those that are present in the chapter provide a well-rounded representation of the themes pertinent to both the project, and those involved in its production. The excluded four would only repeat covered aspects of the analysis of the series, adding very few new details. The contents of the remaining six are viewed within the wider context of the long-1950s and explore a range of economic themes situated at the core of the free enterprise system. Additionally, the style of the cartoons is discussed in the latter half of the chapter to explain how Sutherland utilised advances in animation technology to appeal to viewers and increase audience attendance.

Finally, chapter five, 'The Sort of Propaganda That Parents Should Take Their Children to See,' will determine the success of the series through viewer reception. A range of sources will be employed, including audience comment cards, media coverage, and letters received by the team. Public reaction to the series, through both primary and secondary channels of distribution, will determine the success of the series, as well as its place within modern conservative propaganda.[40] It will also highlight the importance of a forgotten partnership between two unlikely figures.

[40] In regard to film releases, primary distribution refers to a cinematic release, whereas secondary distribution effectively means straight to video.

Chapter One

Alfred P. Sloan and the Fight Against the New Deal

The origins of the *Fun and* Facts series can be traced back to as early as the 1930s when domestic politics threatened conservative notions of the 'American way of life.' The Great Depression changed America's business class who labelled the downturn a political disaster as much as an economic one. During the 1920s, many Americans regarded corporate leaders as the heroes of American politics. As Kim Phillips-Fein explains, the veneration of business, the promise of easy riches through the magic of the stock market, and the absence of a political challenge to capitalism made the decade an ideal time for private enterprise.[41] It was a period of phenomenal abundance, defined by a foreign visitor in 1928 as 'an employer's paradise.' [42] Consequently, the onset of the Depression in 1929 came as a shock to the business community. Only a few saw the calamity coming. Its leaders suddenly found themselves in the midst of a cataclysm; a stark difference to the age of prosperity that had been abruptly taken from them. Without warning, these once influential giants lost the confidence of the people and were blamed for the nation's misfortune. The 'employer's paradise' of the 1920s had ended.

The election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt appeared to many businessmen as a chance to redeem themselves and rebuild a positive relationship between the business community and the public. Even lifelong

[41] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 6.
[42] Quote from a foreign visitor to the United States, in Ibid.

Republicans, such as Walter Chrysler and the du Pont brothers, were optimistic about the new President after the failures of his predecessor Herbert Hoover. Sloan, who had supported Hoover during the election, felt confident in the choice of his associates. As David Farber claims, Roosevelt indicated his preference for sound money principles and said little during his campaign that did not meet with Sloan's approval.[43] Roosevelt's victory, while not Sloan's preference, did not pose a threat.

Things changed, however, with the introduction of the New Deal. The implementation of its policies represented a turning point for American business. As Lizabeth Cohen argues, the New Deal was largely 'made' by the people across the country who responded to the impact of the Depression by taking part in strikes, protests, and in politics more generally.[44] Their actions, alongside the initiatives that came from the White House, symbolised the rejection of laissez-faire economics and threatened to disrupt the power of big business. In response, the business community embarked on an intense assault against FDR and his New Deal programmes. Public Relations campaigns became the weapon of choice. 'The Public does not understand industry', the National Association of Manufacturers argued, 'because industry itself has made no effort to tell its story.'[45] To remedy this, the NAM encouraged big business to follow its lead in promoting the gospel of free enterprise through a bombardment of films, radio shows, advertisements, and

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[43] David Farber, *Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 154.
[44] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1929 – 1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[45] Quote from the NAM, cited in Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), pp. 3 – 4.

more. Right-wing evangelists were also recruited. As Kevin Kruse explains, these men of God could give voice to the same conservative concerns as business leaders, without suspicions of self-interest. Thus began a long-standing relationship between business and religion in the form of corporate-evangelical alliances that worked to fight against the New Deal and government intervention in the economy.[46] Sloan and Benson eventually formed their own alliance in the late 1940s that culminated in Harding's flagship *Fun and Facts* series.

To understand the influences that led to Sloan and Benson's partnership, this chapter will explore the actions of the business community through the lens of Alfred Sloan. Although Sloan had little contact with religious figures until his interaction with Benson, his fight against the New Deal explains how big business rejected a Keynesian economy and fought for the 'hearts and minds' of the American people. Ultimately, it was the New Deal that instilled a sense of urgency in Sloan and encouraged him to enter the realm of public relations to preserve his own brand of Americanism: the free enterprise system.[47]

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[46] Recent historiography on corporate-evangelical alliances has changed the long-standing view that religious activity in this area began in the aftermath of the Second World War, particularly in the run up to the 1980 election. New work now shows the existence of these alliances as early as the start of the twentieth century with an increase in numbers during the 1930s and 1940s in response to the New Deal. These findings can be found in works such as, Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, Darren Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), and Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

[47] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 155.

As the head of the nation's largest automobile company, Sloan embodied the characteristics of America's twentieth century conservative business class. His passion for industry and economic management developed at a young age as a result of his career-orientated upbringing. Born on 23 May 1875 in New Haven, Connecticut, Sloan was the eldest of five children. His parents, originally from upstate New York, belonged to 'old' and respectable families of little wealth. On his mother's side, Sloan's grandfather had been a Methodist minister and the family remained close to the denomination until their deaths. Alfred's religious affiliation is unknown. His paternal grandfather had been a private school master until an illness pushed him to retire and forced Alfred Sr. to drop out of school. By the time Alfred Jr. was born, his father was already a successful merchant and a partner of the tea, coffee, and tobacco company Bennett, Sloan & Co. It was perhaps due to his own educational experience that Sloan Sr. wished for his son to have the best possible schooling. As such, Sloan Jr. attended the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute where his passion for the field of mechanics, and education as a whole, flourished. In 1892, at the age of seventeen, he enrolled at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

As a student of electrical engineering, Sloan expected the work to be difficult. He devoted himself fully to his studies, seeing it as the training ground for professional life. In 1895, he graduated from MIT, completing the four-year course in just three. His father's connection with one of Brooklyn's richest men, John E. Searles of the American Sugar Refining Company, secured him a position within the Hyatt Roller Bearing Company of which Searles held a majority interest. Sloan's professional rise was meteoric. By 1899, he was

president of the company. He reformed the failing business in just six months, setting the precedent for his professional career. In 1916, Hyatt merged with William C. Durant's United Motors Corporation and Sloan was given the position of president. When Durant later incorporated United Motors into General Motors, Sloan was immediately appointed vice-president. He remained in this position after Durant's departure from GM in 1920, working closely with the newly assigned Pierre du Pont to re-organise the company into one of America's leading corporations. In du Pont's eyes, the success of GM was evidence of Sloan's remarkable business skills. Du Pont later nominated his vice-president, Sloan, to lead the company following his departure in 1923. As he had been working towards the top position for years, Sloan accepted the request without hesitation. His appointment as president of GM marked the beginning of his most prolific era in which he would stand as one of America's leading industrialists and campaigners against the New Deal.[48]

Almost immediately, Sloan was thrown into the world of public relations despite his status as an intensely private man. In 1922, a study on the reputation of the company revealed, as Sloan put it bluntly, that it simply had none.[49] 'People throughout the United States, except at the corner of Wall

[48] The information for this biographical section on Sloan's early life can be found in Farber's *Sloan Rules*. Farber's work stands as the most comprehensive biographical study of Sloan, providing as much detail as the author could find. Regrettably, little information exists regarding Sloan's personal affairs. Sloan destroyed his private papers and his autobiography is void of any subjective feelings – focussing instead on the intrinsic workings of GM. Researchers who approach GM's Heritage Centre or the Sloan Foundation will be met with the same response.

[49] Roland Marchand, 'The Corporation Nobody Knew: Bruce Barton, Alfred Sloan, and the Founding of the General Motors "Family,"' *The Business History Review* 65:4 (1991), p. 829.

and Broad Streets, didn't know anything about General Motors', he later recalled.[50] As such, Sloan worked to promote GM to the public and educate Americans on the importance of his corporation to the nation. To lead the task, he hired the advertising executive and devout Christian Bruce Barton. As Roland Marchand argues, Barton was legitimately hailed within business circles as the 'boy wonder' of American advertising during the 1920s.[51] Barton's professional portfolio was impressive, comprising of hundreds of publications on topics concerning business and Christianity. After WWI, he participated in a post-war project with the Interchurch World Movement (IWM) aiming to 'win the world for Christ.'[52] Here, Barton displayed his talent for combining the methods, aspirations, and language of religion and business. The extent to which 'the cult of business [had] penetrated American Protestantism,' Eldon Ernst observes, could be seen within the IWM's advertisements in which church-going readers learned that they were 'stockholders in the greatest business in the world.'[53] These ideas penetrated Barton's most famous work, *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), in which he disseminated his own brand of Americanism in the portrayal of Jesus Christ as a businessman. In this best-selling book, Barton described the son of God as a go-getting young executive who 'picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the

[50] Alfred P. Sloan, *My Years with General Motors* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1998), p. 27.
[51] Marchand, 'The Corporation Nobody Knew,' pp. 826 – 827. Marchand's work focuses primarily on the relationship between Barton and GM. For biographical work on Barton, see Richard M. Fried, *The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).
[52] Roland Marchand, 'The Corporation Nobody Knew,' p. 838.
[53] Eldon Ernst cited in, Ibid.

world.'[54] His ideas signified the merging of these two worlds, long before the corporate-evangelical alliances of the New Deal era.

Sloan, whose religious activity was almost non-existent, was drawn to Barton's reputation as a proficient business consultant. As an advertising executive, Barton offered political and industrial consultancy through the Barton, Durstine, and Osborn advertising agency. Before adding GM to his list of clients, Barton provided his services to corporate giants such as General Mills and the Lever Brothers, helping them sell cereal and soap to mass audiences. His success led him to believe that politicians could be sold in the same way as corporations. In the early 1920s, Barton worked as the publicist and strategist for Governor Calvin Coolidge in the latter's successful Republican presidential nomination bid.[55] As Kerry W. Buckley notes, Coolidge was introduced 'not as a political commodity, not by discussing the issues of the day, but by presenting a personality with whom Americans could identify.'[56]

Barton transferred that strategy to GM's advertising campaign in which he worked to impart a deeper understanding of the corporation to the public. The 1923 booklet, 'A Famous Family,' is one of the first publications from the company's public relations department and an early example of Barton's influence. The objective was to personalise the institution. 'The word

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[54] Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925), p. 19.
[55] On Barton's work with Calvin Coolidge, see Dennis W. Johnson, *Democracy For Hire: A History of American Political Consulting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 14-17 and Kerry W. Buckley, 'A President for the "Great Majority": Bruce Barton's Construction of Calvin Coolidge,' *The New England Quarterly* 76:4 (2003), pp. 593 – 626.
[56] Buckley cited in, Johnson, *Democracy For* Hire, Ibid, p. 15.

"corporation" is cold, impersonal, and subject to misunderstanding,' a GM representative observed. 'Family is personal, human, friendly. This is our picture of General Motors – a big congenial household.'[57] As such, 'A Famous Family' spent time advertising each division within GM, emphasising their 'specialised experience' and 'particular capacity for service.'[58] Instead of using a sweeping family portrait, the campaign introduced each member one by one in the hope that the public would develop a stronger attachment to GM and its sister companies.

Barton's carefully crafted introduction of GM was rolled out to the public over the course of one year. The campaign then intensified to win the hearts and minds of the nation by 'the indirect but graceful procedure' of praising (and thus associating itself with) the nation's most important unsung servants.[59] In a flurry of advertisements, Barton described the indispensable contributions of GM's automobiles to the work of doctors, teachers, letter carriers, mothers, and farmers (to name a few). His flagship campaign, 'That the Doctor Shall Arrive in Time,' was a leading example of what the advertising executive was trying to achieve. The two-page sociodrama depicted a dying girl, her mother, and the doctor, whose GM car had enabled him to deliver artificial respiration just in time. 'The little girl would never have seen another sunrise had it not been for the automobile', the ad proclaimed.[60] GM offered the ad as 'an inspiration' suitable to be hung 'in every factory and plant, in every showroom

[57] GM PR Representative, cited in Marchand, 'The Corporation Nobody Knew,' p. 846.
[58] General Motors Corporation, *A Famous Family* (New York, 1923).
[59] Marchand, 'The Corporation Nobody Knew,' p. 847.
[60] 'That the Doctor Shall Arrive in Time,' *The Saturday Evening Post*, 16 February 1924, pp. 94 – 95.

and service station. May it be a reminder that the service of the automobile is a part of the most sublime service that any human being is privileged to render to another. . .' The ad won a Harvard Award for its effectiveness, whilst a survey of GM dealers found that nearly nine out of ten believed that GM's overall 'institutional campaign is helping mightily in the actual sale of cars.'[61]

Barton was delighted with the result of the campaign, as were Sloan and GM's board of directors. His relationship with GM had proved to Sloan the power and necessity of corporate advertising during a time of increased consumer spending. For many Americans, the standard of living throughout the 1920s improved remarkably over the decade.[62] From 1922 to 1928, disposable income in the United States rose by 50 percent. Industrial productivity doubled and the wage of the average worker – with automobile workers doing considerably better than the mean – was the highest in world. The American economy became a 'buyer's market.' Production soared and, as Marchand argues, only advertising could bring about a balancing level of consumption with mass marketing and an emphasis on consumer credit.[63] Sloan, with the help of Barton, recognised this. Under his leadership, GM spent an average of ten dollars per car in advertising and was the single

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[61] Fried, *The Man Everybody Knew*, p. 62

[62] Of course, the rise in national wealth did not benefit all Americans equally. In *Making a New Deal* (p. 102), Cohen argues that industrial workers in cities such as Chicago did not enjoy the prosperity that advertisers and sales promotors assumed they did. As Frank Stricker claimed in 'Affluence for Whom? – Another Look at Prosperity and the working classes in the 1920s,' *Labour History* 24 (1983), p. 33, 'the struggle for economic security, not the struggle to keep up with the Joneses, dominated working class life in the prosperity decade.' It was a similar story amongst the nation's farmers. For more, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, p. 22.

[63] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920 – 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 29. General information on the state of the US economy during the 1920s can be found in Payne, *Crash!*.

largest buyer of magazine advertising space in the nation during the 1920s.[64] Sloan's critics, many within the automobile industry, rejected the rise of corporate advertising. Most notably, Henry Ford argued that style-based advertising was a malicious trick that fooled consumers into buying products they did not need for reasons that could not stand up to moral scrutiny.[65] However, the decision of Sloan's rivals to abandon advertising and mass consumption only served to strengthen his corporation. The public legitimacy of big business depended on its success of providing economic sustenance and consumer riches to an appreciative people. As such, Sloan ensured GM continued to advertise its new automobiles to a mass market eager to have the latest products, regardless of their need. This was undoubtedly the right strategy. In 1921, GM sold 193,000 vehicles at just 12.7 percent of automobile market. Ford owned 55.7 percent of that market. In 1927, GM had surpassed Ford, selling over 1.8 million vehicles.[66] The 'Famous Family' was now the largest in the industry and among the most popular stocks in America. With the assistance of the nation's leading advertising executive, GM secured its place in the aptly labelled 'employer's paradise.'

The influence of Barton's relationship with the business community extended beyond his successful advertising campaigns of the 1920s. His collaboration with companies such as GM, General Mills, General Electric, and the Lever Brothers is evidence of the existence of corporate-evangelical

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[64] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 103.
[65] Ibid, p. 103. Notable works on the use and criticisms of style-based advertising include, Stewart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) and Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
[66] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 104.

alliances before the well-documented rise of religious activism during the post-Second World War period. As Darren Grem argues, the involvement of conservative evangelicalism in corporate affairs did not begin, as is usually believed, in the lead up to the presidential election of 1980.[67] Instead, as Barton's activities proved, these collaborations began in the early decades of the twentieth century and would continue to rise in prominence during the 1930s and 1940s. For Sloan, his experience with conservative evangelicalism (though not entirely explicit in GM's ads) was indispensable. In the long-term, it would eventually lead to his partnership with Benson. In the short-term, however, it had shown not only to him, but the rest of the business community, the power of 'goodwill' PR campaigns. Such advertising, alongside the continuation of evangelical cooperation, became the choice of weapon for corporate conservatives fighting for their 'American Way of Life' during the Great Depression and FDR's ground-breaking New Deal.

The New Deal and Corporate America

After the prosperity of the 1920s, Sloan could not have predicted the onset of the Depression. Nor could the rest of the business community, despite claims that an overzealous automobile industry contributed to the downturn of the economy.[68] When the stock market faltered on 23 October

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[67] Grem, *The Blessings of Business*, p.3.

[68] There is a wealth of explanations for the causes of the Great Depression, many of which are outlined in, Murray Newton Rothbard, *America's Great Depression* fifth edition (Auburn, AL: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2008). Rothbard's work covers numerous theories including those from Ludwig von Mises and John Maynard Keynes regarding business cycles and fluctuations. Alternative explanations explore issues of general overproduction, under-consumption, inflation, and over-optimism. Though informative, it is worth noting Rothbard's strong bias towards right-wing libertarianism, including anarcho-capitalism and laissez-faire. Alternatively, see Gene Smiley, *Rethinking the Great Depression*

1929, the financial sector expected a swift recovery. Orthodox economic theories held that economic downturns were an inevitable aspect of the business cycle, evident by the short-term recessions of 1923-24 and 1926-27. There was little reason to believe the initial October fluctuations were any different. For three days, panic swept the New York Stock Exchange as investors rushed to sell shares amid plummeting prices. By the Friday, cool heads seemed to have prevailed and the market stabilised. The *New York Times* reported that 'order came quickly out of the chaos in Wall Street' and that officials were 'optimistic.'[69] President Hoover also reported positively to the unexpected, and dramatic, drop in share prices, claiming that 'The fundamental business of the country, that is production and distribution of commodities, is on a sound and prosperous basis.'[70] Sloan followed suit, echoing the phrase 'Business is sound.'[71] The crisis, however, was not averted and panic once again swept the stock market. The economy continued to slump, culminating in the greatest financial crisis of the twentieth century.

Despite being thrown into the midst of a cataclysm, many high-profile industrial leaders continued to dismiss the Depression as a mere cyclical downturn. In his memoirs, Hoover recalled that 'the business world refused, for some time after the crash, to believe that the danger was any more than

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(Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002). For original studies, see Lionel Robbins, *The Great Depression* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), Thomas Wilson, *Fluctuations in Income and Employment* third edition (New York: Pitman, 1948), and John K. Galbraith, *The Crash, 1929* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

[69] Anonymous, 'Stocks gain as market is steadied; Bankers pledge continued support; Hoover says business basis is sound,' *New York Times*, 26 October 1929, p. 1.

[70] Hoover cited in, Charles Rappleye, *Herbert Hoover in the White House: The Ordeal of the Presidency* (New York: Simon &Schuster, Inc, 2016), p. 102.

[71] Sloan cited in, Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 131.

that of run-of-the-mill, temporary slumps such as had occurred at three to seven-year intervals in the past.'[72] As matters deteriorated, rejections of the severity of the crisis persisted. In 1931, one Maryland building contractor wrote to Hoover, 'There is *not five percent* of the poverty, distress, and general unemployment that many of your enemies would have us believe.'[73] Others, such as Charles M. Schwab, offered practical advice to the nation, encouraging Americans to 'Just grin, go on working, stop worrying about the future, and go ahead as best we can.'[74]

Even Hoover, who argued his administration 'took a more serious view of the immediate future', underestimated the longevity of the Depression.[75] In an address to the Chamber of Commerce in 1930, the President announced, 'While the crash only took place 6 months ago, I am convinced we have now passed the worst and with continued unity of effort we shall rapidly recover.'[76] The worst was, of course, far from over. Nevertheless, the President was reluctant to intervene. In his 1922 publication, *American Individualism*, Hoover argued that expanding the authority of the government was dangerous. As a detached arbiter in the economy, the government perpetuated individualism. However, as an active competitor, it would destroy the American way of life.[77] Hoover applied this philosophy to his presidency, advocating volunteerism

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[72] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression, 1929 – 1941* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), pp. 29 – 30.
[73] Unnamed building contractor writing to Hoover, cited in Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, p. 7.
[74] Charles M. Schwab cited in, Ibid.
[75] Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, p. 30.
[76] 'Herbert Hoover: Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, 1 May 1930,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22185], accessed 8 June 2018.
[77] Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1922), pp. 52 – 54.

rather than government intervention in tackling the deepening crisis. He called on individuals, charities, churches, local governments, and businesses to work cooperatively to alleviate suffering and distribute relief. This was not the immediate, large scale aid needed to offset the increasing poverty and the administration's non-interventionist policies were soon rejected by those greatly affected by the Depression. Towards the end of his presidency, Hoover did take some direct action, following two, long drawn-out, years of consultations with the nation's leading industrialists.[78] For the public, however, it was too little, too late.

On the eve of the Depression, unemployment in the United States was at 1,550,000. By 1933, the year Roosevelt entered the White House, this figure had risen to 12,060,000.[79] The superficial reassurances from Hoover and his band of corporate supporters did not resonate well with the public who saw their leaders as not only incompetent, but absurd. They had been trusted with the future of the nation yet refused to admit the seriousness of the crisis

[78] In the early stages of the Depression, Hoover sought the advice of America's corporate giants. Public relations was the initial solution with the belief that strengthening business confidence would stabilise the economy. When this failed, Hoover utilised the powers of government to 'cushion the situation.' This included: the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to provide emergency loans to failing banks and local governments; encouraging the development public works projects; and limited federal relief to the poor. Further details on Hoover's response to the Depression can be found in, William J. Barber, *From New Era to New Deal: Herbert Hoover, the Economists and American Economic Policy, 1921-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Steven Horwitz, 'Herbert Hoover: Father of the New Deal,' *Cato Briefing Papers* 112 (2011), James S. Olsen, 'The End of Voluntarism: Herbert Hoover and the National Credit Cooperation,' *The Annals of Iowa* 41:6 (1972), and David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929 – 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[79] 'Labour Force, Employment, and Unemployment, 1929 – 39: Estimating Methods (1948),' *Bureau of Labour Statistics* [https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1948/article/pdf/labor-force-employment-and-unemployment-1929-39-estimating-methods.pdf], accessed 11 June, 2018.

that the business community arguably started. As the *Washington Post* reported in 1932, 'Public opinion is wearied and cynical.'[80] Consequently, Franklin D. Roosevelt's landslide victory in the 1932 presidential election came as no surprise. The result was hailed as a radical change and, 'on the theory that "things could not be worse,"' FDR's revolutionary New Deal policies were welcomed.[81] Many of America's leading industrialists shared the same sentiment, despite initially supporting Hoover in both the 1928 and 1932 elections. Even Sloan, who donated large sums to Hoover's presidential campaign, did not recoil at the thought of a Democrat in the White House. Though he wished for Hoover to remain in office, Sloan recognised that the President's economic policies of limited government intervention were unsuccessful and jeopardising the reputation of big business. Additionally, a number of Sloan's closest associates publicly supported FDR, including the three du Pont brothers and his closest friend, Walter Chrysler – a life-long Republican.[82] In trusting the judgement of those around him, Sloan shook off his disappointment at Hoover's defeat and welcomed the change with cautious optimism.

The deepening of the Depression gave Sloan a heightened sense of responsibility. He was highly concerned with the well-being of his corporation amidst the continuing deterioration of the economy. Although GM was able to maintain profits, sales and revenues were hit particularly hard and the company lost half of its workforce by the end of 1932. Those that remained

[80] Anonymous, 'Good Riddance to 1932,' *Washington Post*, 31 December 1932, p. 6.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 154.

faced two hourly wage cuts of ten percent each.[83] By this time, GM was so intertwined with the nation – and the economic fortune of much of the world – that Sloan felt he had to intervene in order to preserve the company. However, public work did not come easily to Sloan and, at first, he tried to delegate much of it. His position changed with the introduction of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA). Its purpose was to cooperate with businesses in setting industry wide standards for minimum wages and maximum working hours, 'to increase the consumption of industrial and agricultural products by increasing purchasing power.'[84] Sloan was not opposed to the idea, nor were his associates. In fact, it was first promoted by Gerard Swope of General Electric in 1931 in the hope to re-stimulate mass consumption.[85] Believing in its principles, Sloan tentatively supported the NIRA and agreed to join the Industrial Advisory Board of the National Recovery Administration in an attempt to keep the New Deal in line with the values of private enterprise.

However, the NIRA was not accepted without reservations. Despite intense lobbying from the right, the act was passed with the inclusion of pro-labour policies. Under section 7(a), employees were given the right 'to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers of labour.'[86] This sent a wave of apprehension throughout the automobile industry. During the 1920s, the fight against unionisation was met

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[83] Ibid, p. 155.
[84] 'Transcript of the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933),' *Our Documents* [https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=66&page=transcript], accessed 11 June 2018.
[85] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 169.
[86] 'Transcript of the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933),' *Our Documents*.

with great success: after representing 19.4 percent of the workforce in 1920, the ranks of the labour movement dwindled to 10.2 percent in 1930.[87] Unions were no longer considered a threat to the manufacturing sector. Consequently, the inclusion of section 7 in the NIRA produced fears of radicalism and the loss of managerial authority.[88] These fears were not wholly unjustified as the nation witnessed a sharp increase in strikes during 1933; with approximately less than 50 strikes at the beginning of the year, rising to over 200 before its end.[89] It was certainly an issue for Sloan as the potential for strikes reached GM and threatened to cease production. In seeing the rise of unionisation as a danger to business, Sloan and his fellow corporate conservatives announced their contempt for Roosevelt's pro-labour attitudes and publicly denounced the New Deal.[90]

Sloan's rejection of Roosevelt and his economic policies was demonstrated by his involvement in the rabidly anti-New Deal organisation of the American Liberty League. Established in 1934, the League aimed to organise a coalition of Democrats and Republicans capable of defeating Roosevelt in the 1936 election. It presented itself as a 'non-partisan'

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[87] Original statistics on the labour movement can be found in, Leo Wolman, 'Union Membership in Great Britain and the United States,' *National Bureau of Economic Research* 68 (1937), p. 2. Also, see Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Chicago, Haymarket Books, 1969).

[88] Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labour, and Politics in America, 1920 – 1935* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 197.

[89] United States Department of Labour & Bureau of Labour Statistics, 'Analysis of Strikes in 1937,' *Monthly Labour Review* (1938), p. 2.

[90] For more on the NIRA and its impact on business, see Donald Robert Brand, *Corporatism and the rule of law: A Study of the National Recovery Administration* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), Robert F. Burk, *The Corporate State and the Broker State: The Du Ponts and American National Politics, 1925 – 1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), and Robert F. Himmelberg, *The Origins of the National Recovery Administration: Business, Government, and the Trade Association Issue, 1921 – 1933* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993).

educational group, dedicated to 'teach the necessity of respect for the rights of persons and property . . . and . . . the duty of government to encourage and protect individual and group initiative and enterprise, to foster the right to work, earn, save, and acquire property, and to preserve the ownership and lawful use of property when acquired.'[91] As Frederick Rudolph describes, the League was essentially 'the spokesman for a business civilisation, and a defender of that civilisation from the attacks of the administration in Washington.'[92] It was a direct response to what its founders perceived as a threat to the 'American way of life,' or more specifically, private enterprise.

Whilst Sloan was becoming more vocal in his objection to the New Deal, he still remained a private man. He had carefully crafted the public persona of a clean-cut, head-strong businessman in which GM was his top priority. Through this persona, Sloan appeared as a leader that only concerned himself with matters that related directly to his company. Therefore, whilst he agreed to sit on the Liberty League's advisory board, Sloan refused to appear publicly on behalf of the organisation. In informing Irénée du Pont, one of the League's founders and a substantial financial backer, of his decision, he explained 'It is absolutely essential that I confine myself to the corporation's [GM] work, and only depart in things of this character where the corporation is rather directly involved.'[93] As a result, very few Americans identified Sloan with the Liberty League. It also makes his role in the organisation difficult to trace. He was, however, a leading donor and provided at least $10,000 (approximately

[91] The American Liberty League, *The American Liberty League: A Statement of Its Principles and Purposes* (Washington D.C.: unknown publisher, 1934), p. 1.
[92] Frederick Rudolph, 'The American Liberty League, 1934 – 1940,' *The American Historical Review* 56:1 (1950), p. 21.
[93] Sloan cited in, Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 183.

$122,000 in current dollars) to the dissemination of anti-New Deal propaganda.[94] These funds contributed to 135 pamphlets, monthly newsletters, and dozens of radio broadcasts published by the League in 1935 and 1936. Such propaganda generally fell into three categories: attacks on the New Deal as a whole (with titles like *Is the Constitution for Sale?*, *Americanism at the Crossroads*, and *What is the Constitution Between Friends?*), attacks on specific New Deal legislation (*The AAA Amendments: An Analysis of Proposals Illustrating a Trend Towards a Fascist Control Not Only of Agriculture but Also of a Major Sector of Manufacturing Distributing Industries*), and explicit denunciations of Roosevelt that often compared him to Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and George III (all of which could appear in a single pamphlet). In financing the Liberty League's propaganda, Sloan aligned himself with an extremist organisation that was not afraid to mix its anti-New Deal rhetoric with direct attacks on the President.

Sloan continued to financially contribute to the Liberty League even as the organisation's rhetoric and alliances became far more frantic and fanatical. In 1936, Senator Hugo Black announced an investigation into the League under the guise of the Special Committee to Investigate Lobbying Activities. In reality, as Jared Goldstein argues, Black's investigation was a deliberate attempt to discredit New Deal enemies.[95] His findings succeeded in demonstrating that the Liberty League was deeply connected to other extremist anti-New Deal organisations, including the fascist-leaning Sentinels of the Republic which declared that 'old line Americans of $1,200 a year want

[94] Ibid, p. 184.
[95] Jared Goldstein, 'The American Liberty League and the Rise of Constitutional Nationalism,' *Temple Law Review* 330 (2014), p. 316.

a Hitler' and believed a 'Jewish threat' was undermining 'the fundamental principles of the Constitution.'[96] As the *Washington Post* reported, both Irénée du Pont and Sloan provided small, albeit significant, donations to the organisation, linking the Sentinels to the Liberty League.[97] Another beneficiary was the Southern Committee to Uphold the Constitution, of which Sloan donated $50.[98] Whilst this is a meagre sum compared to the thousands he invested in the Liberty League, Sloan's contribution leant his support to an organisation that mixed anti-New Deal populist diatribes with fervent racism. Infamously, the Committee circulated pictures of Eleanor Roosevelt in the company of two African American Howard University ROTC students. Her husband, the caption warned, was permitting 'negroes to come to the White House banquets and sleep in the White House Beds.'[99] Despite the overt racism, the Committee claimed that it was apparent the Liberty League 'did not disapprove' as they contributed more money after learning of the photos.[100] Sloan himself allegedly donated a further $1000, whilst Pierre du Pont (the brother of Irénée) provided an extra $5,000.[101] 'What could Sloan have been thinking?,' Farber asks.[102] Unfortunately, Sloan's personal

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[96] U.S. Congress Senate, Special Committee to Investigate Lobbying Activities, *Resolutions Providing for an Investigation of Lobbying Activities in Connection with the So-Called "Holding Company Bill,"* S. 2796, 2 – 6 March 1936, p. 2070.
[97] The Associated Press, 'New Deal Foes Help Sentinels, Inquiry Is Told: DuPont, Sloan, Raskob, Smith Named in Lobby Hearing,' *Washington Post*, 18 April 1936, p. 5.
[98] Special Committee to Investigate Lobbying Activities, *Resolutions Providing for an Investigation of Lobbying Activities* p. 1769.
[99] William E. Leuchtenburg, *The White House Looks South: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 126.
[100] Goldstein, 'The American Liberty League and the Rise of Constitutional Nationalism,' p. 318.
[101] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 184.
[102] Ibid.

thoughts towards the activities of these organisations are unknown, but his actions reveal a staunch opposition to government intervention in business following the pro-labour policies of the NIRA, as well as a willingness to support the far-right in his attempts to dismantle the New Deal and oust Roosevelt from the presidency.

In 1936, Sloan and his associates abandoned the Liberty League. The organisation failed to organise an effective coalition against Roosevelt who swept to victory against Republican Alf Landon in the Presidential election. It also failed to attract widespread appeal, with two thirds of the organisation's money coming from thirty men donating $5,000 each.[103] The dozens of speeches and pamphlets disseminated by the League, in which they spoke of the 'ravenous madness' of the New Deal as a monstrous usurpation of power, fell on deaf ears and those involved became the subject of a string of jokes. Democrats dubbed it the 'millionaires Union', whilst the party's chairman quipped that it 'ought to be called the American Cellophane League because, first, it's a du Pont product, and second you can see right through it.'[104] In the midst of the Great Depression, a handful of 'economic royalists', as Roosevelt dubbed them in his acceptance speech, could not effectively defend capitalism.[105] The disparity of wealth between its members and the working population of the United States was simply too vast; and the reputation of big business too severely damaged. Nevertheless, its existence represented the

[103] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, p. 12.
[104] Chairman of the Democratic Party cited in, ibid, p. 13.
[105] 'Franklin D. Roosevelt's Acceptance Speech for the Renomination for the Presidency, 1936,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15314], accessed 15 June 2018.

first widespread, though flawed, attack conducted by the business community against the New Deal.

The demise of the Liberty League did not signal the end of Sloan's, nor his associates', attack on the New Deal. On the contrary, legislation passed in 1935 led to aggressive, nation-wide PR campaigns that extended beyond the confines of the New York elites. In May, the Supreme Court struck down the NIRA after concluding it was an unconstitutional exercise of federal power.[106] Yet, before the business community could rejoice, its controversial section 7(a) was embodied within new legislation. In July, Roosevelt marked the beginning of the second phase of the New Deal with the enactment of the National Labour Relations Act; otherwise known as the Wagner Act. Its similarity to the NIRA was almost identical with the new section 7(a):

> Employees shall have the right to self-organisation, to form, join, or assist labour organisations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection . . .

To prevent employers from interfering with workers' rights, section 8 emphasised that 'It shall be an unfair labour practice for an employer to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in section 7.'[107] The pro-labour policies of 1933 were there to stay, even if the NIRA was not.

The effects of the Wagner Act were damaging across all industrial sectors. In the closing months of 1936, the *Chicago Tribune* reported several

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[106] The case was brought to the Supreme Court by the small New York poultry firm, Schecter Bros. Further information on the dismissal of the NIRA can be found in, Gordon, *New Deals*, pp. 200 – 203.

[107] 'National Labour Relations Act,' *National Labour Relations Board* [https://www.nlrb.gov/resources/national-labor-relations-act], accessed 3 May 2018.

large-scale 'sit-down' strikes. On 17 November, 'hundreds of workers settled down inside the Bendix Products Corporation' in an effort to 'force the corporation to permit 100 percent unionisation of workers.'[108] Whilst there was no immediate threat to production schedules in the automobile industry, companies such as Ford, GM, and Chrysler relied on the brake systems supplied by Bendix. A long strike had the potential to interfere with the entire industry. To make matters worse, approximately 15,000 workers were 'idle' as a result of strikes at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company on 4 December.[109] The lack of production had indirectly caused the shutdown of the Lincoln-Zephyr division of the Ford Motor Company. A few weeks later, a two-month strike affected several GM plants in Flint, Michigan, hitting Sloan directly. With workers barricaded inside the factories from 30 December 1936 to 11 February 1937, assembly lines came to a halt. In December, GM had manufactured approximately fifty thousand automobiles. In the first week of February, they produced 125.[110] The year of 1937 recorded the highest number of strikes in the country's history, culminating in 4,740 during the twelve-month period.[111] The largest of these were against GM in January and Chrysler in March.[112] Evidently, the pro-labour policies of the Wagner Act caused widespread disruption to the automobile industry. It marked a significant turning point for corporate conservatives who agreed that

[108] William O'Neil, 'Strikers Settle Down in Closed Bendix Factory,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 November 1936, p. 5.
[109] Anonymous, 'Ford, Plymouth Hit by Strikes in Parts Shops,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 December 1936, p. 16.
[110] Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 208.
[111] United States Department of Labour & Bureau of Labour Statistics, 'Analysis of Strikes in 1937', *Monthly Labour Review* (1938), p. 1.
[112] Ibid, p. 4.

government intervention in business had gone too far. It is little wonder that, in the following years, Sloan and his associates worked so tirelessly to promote the free enterprise system. They were now intent on educating the public and dismantling the New Deal. The most effective way to achieve this, industry believed, was through a bombardment of aggressive pro-business propaganda campaigns that would attempt to bolster the reputation of big business and stress the importance of conservative notions of Americanism to the welfare of the nation. The public would be targeted through mass media, the ideal medium to reach large audiences in an age of technological advancements.[113]

After the failures of the Liberty League, the National Association of Manufacturers stood as the leading organisation in the fight against the New Deal. Formed in the late nineteenth century to coordinate opposition to organised labour, the NAM worked to 'serve the purposes of business salvation' during the Depression.[114] In 1935 its president Clinton L. Bardo announced:

> Whether we like it or not, industry, much against its will, has been forced, in sheer self-defence, to enter the political arena or be destroyed as a private enterprise. For the past two years . . . the normal problems of depression have been magnified many times by a deliberate and well-timed rapid fire and devastating attack by economic crackpots, social reformers, labour demagogues, and political racketeers.

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[113] For historiography on the strike wave following the enactment of the Wagner Act, see Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1997), Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, and Immanuel Ness (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (London: Routledge, 2009), and Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labour* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). For the sit-down strikes at General Motors, see Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969).
[114] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, p. 14.

Instead of living under the 'American System' of limited federal control, as outlined by the Constitution, Bardo claimed the nation was living under a government 'which assumes and exercises a growing dictatorship over the economic and social life of the people.'[115] To prevent further government intervention, he devised a two-part strategy to restore the free enterprise system. Its first step was to have NAM members testify against the Wagner Act before Congress. When this failed, its legal department argued that it violated the Constitution in regards to traditional property rights and individual freedom.[116] NAM lawyers urged industrialists to resist the law, challenge it in court, and wait for it to be overturned. There was hope that the Supreme Court would judge the Wagner Act unconstitutional as it did two months prior with the NIRA.

After an unsuccessful legal battle, the NAM turned to public relations. In 1937, it found that 66 per cent of the public had an unfavourable opinion of business.[117] The citizenry, the NAM argued, had embraced Roosevelt's New Deal and the White House's criticism of business through federal government dominance over the public debate.[118] To counter this, the organisation hired its first full-time director of public relations and more than doubled its propaganda expenditures from 18.2 per cent of its total budget in 1935 to 39.9

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[115] Anonymous, 'Business in Politics,' *New York Times*, 8 December 1935, p. 1.
[116] James Hoopes, *Corporate Dreams: Big Business in American Democracy from the Great Depression to the Great Recession* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 53.
[117] Burton St. John III & Robert Arnett, 'The National Association of Manufacturers' Community Relations Short Film Your Town: Parable, Propaganda, and Big Individualism,' *Journal of Public Relations Research* 26 (2014), p. 104.
[118] Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, p. 14.

per cent in 1936.[119] Though not all corporations joined or agreed with the NAM, Richard S. Tedlow believes the organisation played a pivotal role in promoting the free enterprise system during a time of corporate crisis.[120] It certainly sparked the interest of Sloan who, in 1934, chaired the NAM's National Industrial Information Council (NIIC). From its inception, the NIIC was responsible for the circulation of 2 million copies of cartoons, 4.5 million copies of newspaper columns, 2.4 million foreign language news pieces, and 11 million employee leaflets. Its educational film series, shown in schools and theatres across the country, achieved approximately 18 million views.[121] As was the case for *Fun Facts*, Sloan made regular donations for the production and distribution of these educational materials, though his input in the content is unknown.

Together with traditional forms of propaganda, the NAM also reached out to conservative Christians in its efforts to thwart the New Deal. The barrage of pro-free enterprise materials released by the organisation was not enough to salvage the reputation of big business. Ultimately, its attempts at self-promotion were seen as precisely that. As one observer later commented, 'Throughout the thirties, enough of the corporate campaign was marred by extremist, overt attacks on the unions and the New Deal that it was easy for critics to dismiss the entire effort as mere propaganda.'[122] This was certainly

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[119] Richard S. Tedlow, 'The National Association of Manufacturers and Public Relations during the New Deal,' *The Business History Review* 50:1 (1976), p. 33.
[120] Ibid, pp. 27 – 28.
[121] 'The National Association of Manufacturers and Visual Propaganda,' *Hagley: Smithsonian Affiliate* [http://www.hagley.org/librarynews/research-national-association-manufacturers-and-visual-propaganda], accessed 13 June 2018. For more details on the NAM's campaigns, particularly its radio segments, see Bird, *"Better Living,"* pp. 54 – 58.
[122] Unknown commentator cited in, Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, p. 4.

the case for the Liberty League whose efforts were seen as a collection of tycoons looking out for their own gains. To counter such criticisms, the NAM recognised that it needed spokesmen that appeared objective in their defence of pro-business interests. The idea to enlist religious activists to attack Roosevelt and the New Deal came from the actions of the President himself. As a practising Episcopalian, Roosevelt often drew on spiritual themes and imagery throughout his career. According to his biographer, James MacGregor Burns, 'probably no American politician has given so many speeches that were essentially sermons rather than statements of policy.'[123] The forging of politics and religion was evident in the introduction of the New Deal, in which Roosevelt and his allies revived the language of the Social Gospel to justify the creation of a welfare state. Defined by one of its adherents, the Social Gospel centred on 'the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions . . . as well as to individuals.'[124] In this sense, the proposal for a vast welfare state as set out by the New Deal was described by liberal clergyman as simply 'the Christian thing to do.'[125] Prominent endorsers of the Social Gospel dominated the ranks of the New Deal administration, including the Secretary of the Interior, Frances Perkins, and the head of the

[123] James MacGregor Burns, *The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1956), p. 476.
[124] Unnamed adherent of the Social Gospel cited in, Ronald C. White Jr and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), p. xi.
[125] Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, p. 5.

Works Progress Administration and one of Roosevelt's top advisors, Harry Hopkins.[126]

To anti-New Dealers, the public service themes of the Social Gospel were incompatible with the central tenet of Christianity. The salvation of the individual. As Kruse explains, if any political or economic system was to fit with the religious teachings of Christ in this sense, it would have to be rooted in a similarly individualist ethos.[127] This line of thought, motivated by a rejection of Roosevelt's liberal Christianity, provided the NAM with a new means of attack. NAM president, H. W. Prentis, argued that the organisation needed to beat Roosevelt at his own game. 'The only antidote', he warned, 'is a revival of American patriotism and religious faith.'[128] At the NAM's annual conference in 1940, Prentis invited Reverend James W. Fifield Jr. to deliver a passionate speech in defence of the free enterprise system to five thousand leading industrialists. The immediate reaction was overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating to the audience the effectiveness of recruiting religious activists for business propaganda.

Prentis' initial efforts, however, were undermined by the NAM's forceful approach in appealing to ministers in the aftermath of the conference. The religious community was targeted with aggressive outreach campaigns and mass mailings in the hope of swinging them over to industry's side. For all the time and effort, the NAM's strategy was met with little success. Writing to J. Howard Pew Jr. in 1945, Alfred Haake explained why the NAM's campaign to

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[126] For further information on the New Deal and its link to the Social Gospel, see Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).
[127] Kruse, *One Nation Under* God, p. 7.
[128] H. W. Prentis cited in, ibid, p. 6.

ministers had failed. 'Of the approximately thirty preachers to whom I have thus far talked, I have yet to find one who is unqualifiedly impressed,' Haake reported. He continued,

> One of the men put it almost typically for the rest when he said: 'The careful preparation and framework for the meetings to which we are brought is too apparent. We cannot help but see that it is expertly designed propaganda and that there must be big money behind it. We easily become suspicious.'[129]

If industrialists wished to convince clergymen to side with them in the future, they would need a subtler approach. Yet, despite the initial failings of the NAM in the mass recruitment of clergymen, its efforts demonstrate an attempt to forge links between business and religion before the conservative revival of the 1950s. Furthermore, as a leading member of the organisation and an active participant in the NIIC, Sloan would have been aware of the power of religious activism in the fight for American individualism, as well as the failures of forming significant alliances. It is possible that Sloan, encouraged by the reception of Fifield, learnt from the mistakes of the NAM and employed a subtle approach in his first meeting with Benson.

Alongside religious involvement in anti-New Deal propaganda, the use of educational films as a means to promote American industry is of particular importance. The medium was positioned at the centre of the *Fun and Facts* project, together with Sloan and Benson's corporate-evangelical alliance. As

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[129] Letter to J. Howard Pew Jr. from Alfred Haake, dated February 1945 cited in ibid, p. 17. J. Howard Pew Jr. was a leading member of the NAM, as well as the president of Sun Oil. He was a devout Christian himself, yet could not lead the charge on religious activism given his position as an industrialist. As was the case with the NAM's initial propaganda campaigns, Pew's efforts would have been criticised as the promotion of self-interests. For more on Pew, see Darren Grem, '*Christianity Today*, J. Howard Pew, and the Business of Conservative Evangelicalism,' *Enterprise & Society* 15:2 (2014), pp. 337 – 379.

the term suggests, these films were produced for the sole purpose of educating the viewer though, as George Kleine states, the word 'educational' is used in a wide sense. It 'does not indicate that these films are intended for school or college use exclusively. They are intended rather for the education of the adult as well as the youth, for the exhibition before miscellaneous audiences, as well as for more restricted use.'[130] The NAM, together with smaller organisations and individual companies, sought to capitalise on the rising popularity of the motion picture and the increase of cinema attendance during the 1930s. The average weekly audience at cinemas in the US was higher than anywhere in the world with an estimated 61 percent of the population watching at least one film per week.[131] Educational films were approximately ten-minutes in length and often shown before the main feature. There was also a growing market for the genre in the classroom, providing a large audience for industrial sponsored films. Armed with this innovative and evolving technology, corporate conservatives hoped to capture the attention of the everyday American and educate them in the workings of the free enterprise. If the public understood the service big business provided to the nation, the 'employers paradise' would be restored and the New Deal eradicated. Educational films had the potential to effectively showcase the contributions of business through the use of moving pictures and engaging narratives, during the golden years of the film industry. As such, the genre witnessed a boom in production during the mid-1930s and into the 1940s.

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[130] George Kleine cited in, Orgeron et al, *Learning with the Lights Off*, pp. 9 – 10.
[131] St. John III & Arnett, 'The National Association of Manufacturers' Community Relations Short Film Your Town,' p. 106.

The NAM's 1940 production, *Your Town*, is an early example of the organisation's venture into educational films. The opening scene of the film aptly describes its aim, claiming 'Our duty to ourselves and to our country is to study the American way of life . . . to understand the institutions that have made this country great, and understanding, to cherish and defend them.' What follows is a ten-minute explanation on the NAM's interpretation of the 'American way of life' – the free enterprise system. This is done by a grandfather explaining to his grandson the importance of the town factory. In a link to the New Deal, the grandfather states, 'There are a lot of people who seem to think that it's smart to criticise an established institution, like the factory . . . but that factory isn't just a building of bricks and steel. It's more than that . . . It's your town.' He then goes on to describe the humble beginnings of the town. It was a small place, very few lived there, and business was quiet. It all changed when Mason, an aspiring businessman, built the factory. 'As the factory prospered, the whole town prospered.' The influx of people, the building of hospitals, schools, and media outlets – everything was directly or indirectly linked to the factory. It is a success story with a larger meaning; 'The story of your town is the story of America.'[132] *Your Town* is a fine example of the message anti-New Deal industrialists wished to impart to the public. Industry was what made America 'great.' The freedom

[132] 'The National Association of Manufacturers: Your Town,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K6YWLCYyz0], accessed 3 May 2018. The idea for *Your Town* may have come from Thornton Wilder's famous theatrical production, *Our Town* (1938). In a similar narrative style to the NAM production, Wilder's play follows the lives of ordinary Americans in a small fictional town. Whilst there is no evidence of any links between the two, it is possible that the public relations department of the NAM drew inspiration from *Our Town* given its instant critical acclaim. For an overview of the play, see: '*Our Town*', *The Thornton Wilder Society* [http://www.twildersociety.org/works/our-town/], accessed 3 October 2018.

to showcase such direct, pro-industrialist views to an audience of 6.5 million Americans in the cinema (within its first year alone), was evidence of how useful educational films were to corporate conservatives during the Depression.[133]

With encouragement from the NAM, small organisations and individual businesses began to increase their public relations output through educational films. Prominent companies included those such as United States Steel and Republic Steel, as well as GM's sister company Chevrolet. Though not recognised as significant producers of films, US Steel and Republic Steel were heavily involved in sponsoring educational materials for public relations purposes from the late 1930s to the 1950s. Examples of their work include *Steel: A Symphony of Industry* (Republic Steel & American Iron and Steel Institute, 1936) and *Steel: Man's Servant* (US Steel, 1938). Despite coming from different companies, these films present the same message. They both show the workings of the steel industry whilst advocating for 'public reliance on free-enterprise capitalism as well as on technological progress, experts, and corporate paternalism.'[134] For individual companies, it was common for films to show how their particular industry operated and benefitted society.

Similarly, the Chevrolet Motoring Company released a twenty-six-minute film in 1937, entitled *From Dawn to Sunset*. Whilst promoting the free enterprise system, this film also emphasised the importance of the consumer.

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[133] St. John III & Arnett, 'The National Association of Manufacturers' Community Relations Short Film Your Town,' p. 110.

[134] More on the production of educational films by United States Steel and Republic Steel can be found in, Sara Sullivan, 'Corporate Discourses of Sponsored Films of Steel Production in the United States, 1936 – 1956,' *The Velvet Light Trap* 72 (2013), p. 33.

It depicted employees serving both the corporation and the nation as purchasers of goods, rather than stereotypical workers in factories. The idea was to present the corporation's workers as well-paid and job-secure consumers instead of 'tenacious rank-and-file unionists.'[135] This added an additional element to public relations campaigns. As well as showing the workers the importance of the free enterprise system, it highlighted the benefits of their hard work. The *Fun and Facts* series would later adopt this tactic, possibly originating as an idea from Sloan himself, given his position as President of General Motors.

Although Chevrolet released the first educational film as part of the GM family, *From Dawn to Sunset* did not use the corporation's name. The first production produced specifically by GM was entitled *Round and Round* (1939). Unlike those released by the NAM, Chevrolet, and the steel industry, *Round and Round* was a simple, stop motion film made to provide a straightforward explanation of a free economy. Produced by the Jam Handy Organisation, the film itself is short, at approximately six minutes long, and features the workings of a 'widget' factory. The principal purpose of the film was to explain how the factory benefited society as a whole. The consumers' money that they used to buy the 'widgets' is spent on raw materials needed for the items, and this is then given back to the same consumers who just so happened to be those who provided the materials in the first place. As the narrator

[135] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003), pp. 19 – 20. *From Dawn to Sunset* can be viewed at the Internet Archive at: 'From Dawn to Sunset,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/1315_From_Dawn_to_Sunset_M00166_00_17_40_00], accessed 14 June 2018.

emphasises, 'Money seems to travel round and round in this widget business', finishing with 'Maybe that's true in other lines of business too. Don't you think so?'[136] As a simple production, it does not hold the same entertainment value as other films produced during the Depression. However, like all of Sloan's messages, it is short, informative, and to the point.

Unfortunately, the impact of *Round and Round* on the public is unknown, though it was considerably more successful than Sloan's venture with the self-titled Sloan Foundation later that year. Established in 1934 as a non-profit, philanthropic organisation, the Sloan Foundation stood as a separate entity to the General Motors Corporation.[137] In a PR announcement, Sloan stated 'This particular foundation proposes to concentrate to an important degree on a single objective, i.e. the promotion of a wider knowledge of basic economic truths generally accepted by authorities of recognised standing and as demonstrated by experience.'[138] In 1937, after the damaging effects of GM's sit-down strike, Sloan donated $10 million dollars to the foundation for this purpose.[139] The following year, the Foundation Director (and Sloan's brother), Dr Harold S. Sloan, announced the initiation of 'a bombardment of the American mind with elementary economic principles' through the foundation's partnering colleges and universities. He assured the public that the foundation

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[136] 'Round & Round,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGqF7PFs-Y4], accessed 3 May 2018.
[137] 'About,' *Alfred P. Sloan Foundation* [http://www.sloan.org/about-the-foundation/], accessed 3 May 2016.
[138] Sloan cited in, Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 210.
[139] Ibid.

'has no particular economic philosophy to promulgate' but wished to help 'disseminate the facts.'[140]

The Foundation, however, was anything but neutral. Both Alfred and Harold Sloan ardently opposed the New Deal and were unwilling to support economic principles that did not align with the free enterprise system. Their refusal to provide a platform for differing economic theories was demonstrated by the Foundation's failed live-action project at New York University (NYU) in 1939. Initially, it was the university's administrators' hesitance to imply favouritism towards a particular school of economic thought that almost prevented the project's launch.[141] Despite their reservations, NYU went ahead and established the Educational Film Institute (EFI) with Sloan Foundation funding. A group of the nation's best-known progressive documentarians and artists (Willard Van Dyke, Irving Lerner, Ben Maddow, and members of the Group Theatre, etc.) were paid to produce three educational films on rural and working-class America; *The Children Must Learn, And So They Live,* and *Valley Town*. The first of these, *Valley Town*, set the precedent for the remainder of the project. The film focused on the role of the machine in the manufacturing sector and how automation displaced workers, exploring solutions of systemic unemployment. Originally running at thirty-five minutes, *Valley Town* made its debut at a Steel Workers' convention in Chicago on 14 May 1940.[142] Its release angered Sloan. He could not believe that his

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[140] Dr Harold S. Sloan cited in, Caroline Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series,' *Enterprise & Society* 16:3 (2015), p. 497.
[141] Ibid, p. 497.
[142] *Valley Town* can be viewed on the Internet Archive at, 'Valley Town,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/ValleyTown-AStudyOfMachinesAndMen], accessed 14 June 2018.

foundation's money had been used to produce a film that blamed corporations for not aiding workers who were causalities of the machine age. He reiterated that the Sloan Foundation's efforts were to persuade the public, not to 'set up an educational debate.'[143] Edits were made to the film. However, funding for the project was withdrawn before their completion as the following two films failed to meet Sloan's ideological approval. Sadly for Sloan, he had fallen victim to the hostile attitudes of educators who refused to showcase propaganda in academic institutions during the interwar period.[144]

Sloan was not alone in his failure to produce successful educational films. The business community sought to revitalise its public standing through the use of the motion picture, however, its damaging reputation prevented any meaningful progress. In the two decades prior to the Depression, the future of industrial sponsored educational films seemed promising. According to Joseph Corn, both commercial and non-profit organisations initially clamoured for 'educationals and industrials.'[145] It became a common policy for theatres, such as the Strand in New York, to demand at least one educational picture per week and by 1915, these productions were considered 'an indispensable part of a well-balanced theatre program.'[146] Whilst statistics on early films are hard to come by, there was one company in particular who benefited from such positive responses towards educational films. The Ford Motoring Company

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[143] Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business,' pp. 497 – 498.
[144] A study on the collaboration between the Sloan Foundation and the NYU Educational Film Institute can be found in, Dan Streible, 'The Failure of the NYU Educational Film Institute,' in *Learning with the Lights Off* , eds. Orgeron et al, pp. 271 – 294.
[145] Joseph Corn, 'Selling Technology: Advertising Films and the American Corporation 1900-1920,' *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11:3 (1981), p. 55.
[146] Anonymous, 'Patin Organises Company to Handle Educationals,' *Motion Picture News*, 29 May 1915, p. 40.

offered its signature newsreel, *Ford Animated Weekly,* free of charge to theatres across the US resulting in 3 million viewers in 2,000 movie houses.[147] It was estimated that each film attracted a weekly attendance of 11.3 per cent of the nation's film audience. 'A distribution', stated the *Ford Times*, 'that any of the great exchanges may envy.'[148] With the success of Ford's newsreel, there was a significant increase in the production of educational films. Articles on 'important industrial films' listed 120 firms (not including trade associations) that had jumped on the motion picture bandwagon in 1920.[149]

By the 1930s, Americans, both in the cinema and in the classroom, had lost faith in their corporate leaders and saw the films for what they were; propaganda. As William Bird argues, whilst there is little evidence on the reception of individual films, what does remain suggests that developments in sponsored productions were hampered by business' transparent and self-interested defence of its own welfare.[150] Paul Saettler echoes this sentiment, arguing 'no commercial educational producer could achieve success without national support, and that support could not be attained until the users of educational films were convinced that no "special interests" were invading the classroom' (or the big screen).[151]

The issue of corporate propaganda in the classroom is particularly interesting. Evidence on the response to these films in the cinema is scarce, particularly for the 1930s. Reactions from sceptical educators, however, is

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[147] David L. Lewis, *The Public Image of Henry Ford: An American Folk Hero and His Company* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976), p. 115.
[148] Excerpt from the *Ford Times* cited in, ibid.
[149] Corn, 'Selling Technology,' p. 55.
[150] Bird, *"Better Living,"* pp. 125 – 126.
[151] Paul Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 1990), p. 106.

plentiful. In 1937, David H. Stevens of the Rockefeller Foundation hired educational psychologist F. Dean McClusky to investigate the causes for the failure of educational films so that remedies could be put in place. Abstracts from the report support Bird's conclusion that industrial films had damaged the genre, stating:

> 4. . . .While leading educators have recognised the potential value of motion pictures in education, they have quietly and continuously opposed all attempts to introduce into broad classroom use motion pictures which smacked of commercialism, low moral tone, propaganda or controversial issues. The unsatisfactory pictures were found to be so numerous that the good ones suffered from being too frequently found in bad company.
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> 5. The stupidity which has characterised the advertising, propaganda, and sales methods of companies producing and distributing so-called 'educational' motion pictures created strong opposition in educational circles to school films, good or bad.[152]

As these films dominated the market until the Second World War, the genre continued to be rejected by both commercial and non-profit institutions. Consequently, the motives of the business class had a damaging and long-lasting effect, not only on itself, but on the use of educational films during the 1930s in general.

Competition From The Left

The rejection of corporate sponsored propaganda by various film and educational institutes was not the only issue that plagued the business community in the realm of public relations. In trying to sway public opinion, corporate conservatives had to compete, once again, with the propaganda

[152] Abstract from McClusky's 1937 report cited in, ibid, pp. 106 – 107.

efforts of Roosevelt and his New Deal administration. Roosevelt himself was a masterful public speaker who strongly believed that he was his own best propagandist.[153] Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the President used his oratory skills to sell the New Deal directly to the public through a series of radio speeches known as the Fireside Chats. The Great Depression, Randal L. Hall argues, coincided with the routinisation of radio listening despite financial hardships.[154] As technology improved, radios became smaller and cheaper, making them more accessible to the average American family. At the start of the decade, 12 million households owned a radio, a number that rose to more than 28 million by 1939; in Mississippi, where the national average was at the lowest, statistics rose from 12.3 percent in 1930 to 39.9 percent in 1940.[155] Radio, therefore, was the ideal medium in which to reach out to masses.

In his Fireside Chats, Roosevelt employed certain techniques and rhetorical devices with great effectiveness, allowing the audience to feel closer to the President like never before. As one of his speech writers, Judge Rosenman, recalled, Roosevelt 'looked for words that he would use in an informal conservation with one of two of his friends.'[156] He frequently referred to himself as 'I', whilst addressing the American people as 'you.' Many of his

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[153] Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert, and David Welch, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 411.
[154] Randal L. Hall, *Lum and Abner: Rural America and the Golden Age of Radio* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p. 2.
[155] For national statistics on radio ownership, see 'Radio in the 1930s,' *PBS* [http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/radio-in-the-1930s/], accessed 1 October 2018. For regional statistics, see Hall, *Lum and Abner*, p. 2. For the wider significance of radio to American political culture, see Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920 – 1940* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000).
[156] Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), pp. 92 – 93.

speeches sought to unite the audience against a common enemy: 'the few men, who might thwart this great common purpose by seeking selfish advantage'; 'the professional economists who insist that things must run their course and that human agencies can have no influence on economic ills'; 'those in industry who are guilty of unfair practices.'[157] These attacks on the business community were perfectly timed - coinciding with its rapid decline in popularity - and were often accompanied by a defence of New Deal programmes. The 'unmistakable march toward recovery,' Roosevelt argued, would be achieved by the creation of organisations such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. These programmes, he claimed, were 'giving opportunity of employment to a quarter of a million of the unemployed.'[158] The language used in justifying the existence of New Deal programmes was simple, whilst his arguments offered hope during a time of crisis. The messages presented by a clear, resonant voice, convincing the American people that it was their government and their country, appeared far more successful than the aggressive corporate campaigns from New York's tycoons. Unlike his conservative counterparts, Roosevelt instilled a sense of familiarity that resonated with scores of his

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[157] Quotes from Roosevelt's Fireside Chats cited in, Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy (eds.), *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), pp. xviii. Buhite and Levy's work contains a collection of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, as was presented to the American public through radio broadcasts. Snippets of audio clips can also be accessed through The White House Historical Association, see 'The Fireside Chats: Roosevelt's Radio Talks,' *The White House Historical Association* [https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-fireside-chats-roosevelts-radio-talks], accessed 1 October 2018. On the significance of Roosevelt's first Fireside Chat, see Amos Kiewe, *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (College station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007). For criticisms, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal, 1933 – 1935* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

[158] Quote from Roosevelt cited in, Buhite and Levy (eds.), *FDR's Fireside Chats*, p. 21.

listeners. A poem by the New York writer and folklorist, Carl Lamson Carmer, summed up the feeling of many Americans:

> . . . I never saw him –
> But I *knew* him. Can you have forgotten
> How, with his voice, he came into our house,
> The President of the United States,
> Calling us friends . . .[159]

With the success of the Fireside Chats, Roosevelt expanded his New Deal propaganda campaign beyond the confines of the radio and into the genre of the nonfiction film. His radio broadcasts demonstrated an ability to connect with the public, whilst the business community failed to rally any substantial support. The next logical step was to counter pro-business propaganda in the realm of the motion picture. Like his most staunch critics, Roosevelt recognised the increasing power of film. According to *Variety*:

> The President of the United States is close to being the most avid film fan and student of the screen in America today . . . He is said to see the screen as mirroring current public sentiment and to believe that this provides him with an opportunity of getting closer to the people. One Spokesman declares: 'The President is sold on the idea of the influence of films on the American people.'[160]

The implementation of New Deal film propaganda was entrusted to the Resettlement Administration (RA). Created to aid farm families in the process of relocation, the RA sponsored radio and photography campaigns and financed the work of artists and authors such as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and James Agee.[161] In 1934, the RA appointed Pare Lorentz as its film consultant. Like Roosevelt, Lorentz believed that film was

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[159] A poem by Carl Lamson Carmer cited in, ibid, pp. xx.
[160] Anonymous, *Variety*, 24 April 1934.
[161] Cora Sol Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye: American Visual Propaganda in Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 43.

an enormously powerful medium. In 1934, he sought to publish a motion picture retrospective of the President's first year in office, capturing the problems that America faced, as well as the attempts of the New Deal in resolving the crisis. Funds were short, however, and Lorentz was forced to abandon his initial idea. Instead, he collected a large series of photographs that captured the major events of the year and published them in a book together with captions and commentary. Roosevelt was impressed with the publication and invited Lorentz to work with the RA to produce a number of films. From here, Lorentz was known, first and foremost, as FDR's filmmaker.

During the 1930s, Lorentz produced two key films for the New Deal administration. The first of these, *The Plow that Broke the Plain* (1936), was set in the Great Plains and sought to convince farmers and ranchers that the search for profits in the West had resulted in misplaced settlement, misuse of the land, and the great dust storms that battered the area in the 1930s. The Dust Bowl, as described by Donald Worster, was the darkest moment in the twentieth-century life of the southern plains.[162] It was an event of national significance, caused by a culture that deliberately dominated and exploited the land for all its worth. The condition of the soil following the storms led to widespread hunger and poverty, forcing families to leave the region. In 1935, the head of the RA, Rexford Tugwell, approached Lorentz to produce a film

[162] Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 4. For further context on the Dust Bowl, see Douglas R. Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1981), Michael L. Cooper, *Dust to Eat: Drought and Depression in the 1930s* (New York: Clarion Books, 2004), and Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2006). For the government response, see Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

that would explain the causes of the Dust Bowl, whilst simultaneously advocating for the resettlement of farmers. The twenty-eight minute production depicts scenes of acres of lush, billowy grasslands whilst a narrator explains how beautiful the region had been before the period of European American settlement. As the music grows louder, with increasingly harsh tones, the film shows the movement of cattlemen onto the Plains, the coming of railroads, and waves of farmers with horses and gang plows breaking up the grasslands. This may have brought immediate prosperity, the film argues, but it led to a desolate wasteland and crippling poverty.[163]

Despite the remarkable imagery, blended with a powerful musical score, *The Plow the Broke the Plains* was initially blocked from exhibition in most commercial cinemas. The reason given was due to an issue with the film's length. At twenty-eight minutes, it was too long for a short piece, yet too short for a full-length feature. In truth, as William Uricchio and Marja Roholl claim, the RA-produced film was seen by many as little more than New Deal propaganda.[164] It was only after New York's Rialto Theatre was persuaded to show the film, and the film demonstrated its powerful impact, that it received widespread distribution. It appeared that New Deal films were not immune to fears concerning the use of propaganda in the nonfiction genre. Once accepted, however, *The Plow*, encouraged a national debate on the issue of the Dust Bowl whilst, at the same time, promoting the efforts of the RA. As

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[163] *The Plow that Broke the Plains* can be viewed on the Internet Archive, see 'The Plow That Broke the Plains,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/gov.fdr.352.2a.1], accessed 2 October 2018.

[164] William Uricchio and Marja Roholl, 'From New Deal Propaganda to National Vernacular: Pare Lorentz and the Construction of an American Public Culture,' in *Over [T]here: Essays in Honour of Rob Kroes* [European Contributions to American Studies, Vol 60] (Amsterdam: VU Free University Press, 2005), p. 5.

the film's narrator explains, those that were forced to leave the Great Plains simply wanted 'a chance for their children to eat, to have medical care, to have homes again.' The resettlement program of the RA, the film inferred, would provide all of this.

Lorentz's second film, *The River* (1937), surpassed the accomplishments of his first feature to stand as the New Deal's most successful propaganda piece. In a similar fashion to *The Plow*, *The River* blamed the short-sighted greed of the individual for the plight of the land; this time both farmers and lumberjacks. The practises of these workers had caused topsoil to be swept down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, leading to catastrophic floods and, once again, impoverished farmers. The imagery is powerful, together with another impressive score. The consequences of the floods are described in astounding figures of deaths, injuries, homelessness, disease, and poverty. 'We built one hundred cities and one thousand towns,' the narrator states, 'but at what cost.' In a more reassuring second half, *The River* explains how Congress provided essential aid to flood victims. Unlike the pro-business propaganda of corporate conservatives, it emphasises that direct help is at hand. Additionally, the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority is introduced in the clean-up operation. This New Deal program was actively working to resolve the crisis through a series of dams authorised by the government. Only through government intervention, the film implies, can the nation receive the support it needs in times of crises.[165]

[165] *The River* can be viewed on the Internet Archive, see 'The River,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/gov.fdr.352.2a.2], accessed 2 October 2018.

Public reaction towards for *The River* was overwhelmingly positive. Frank Nugent from the *New York Times* called it 'poetic, stirring, and majestic', whilst the *Herald-Tribune* praised its 'brooding beauty and impact' and the ability to make 'social history vital, understandable, and dramatic.'[166] The film also won the top award for the documentary feature at the 1938 Venice Film Festival, beating Leni Riefenstahl's two-part feature *Olympiad* for the prestigious award. Yet, despite its success, certain cinemas, once again, refused to showcase the film. This time, there was an unprecedented backlash from Hollywood which, after recognising Lorentz's talents, fought to reduce competition in the nonfiction genre. Roosevelt, who was enthusiastic about the film, directly intervened by having Tom Corcoran, an important New Deal figure, apply direct pressure on Hollywood. Corcoran threatened anti-monopolistic action if studios continued the boycott.[167] As Paramount was already under investigation, it reluctantly agreed to distribute the film. *The River* was eventually screened in over 3,000 theatres.[168]

As with *The Plow*, there were also fears concerning the inclusion of New Deal propaganda in motion pictures, though these critics were few and far between. Republicans and anti-New Deal Democrats in Congress attacked the RA, as well as its successor the United States Film Service, claiming the programs were direct extensions of the Roosevelt administration. As a result, Congress attempted to cut its funding, on multiple occasions, alleging that

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[166] Frank Nugent cited in, *New York Times*, 5 February 1938. Harold Barnes cited in, *Herald-Tribune*, 5 February 1938.
[167] Uricchio and Roholl, 'From New Deal Propaganda to National Vernacular,' p. 6.
[168] Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), p. 86. For more on Hollywood's fear of competition from Lorentz, see Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye*, p. 43

Lorentz was using public funds to make pro-Roosevelt propaganda.[169] Nevertheless, both *The Plow* and *The River* were far more successful than the pro-business films financed by Sloan and his associates.

Through his New Deal documentary work, Lorentz contributed to the growth of factual films during the 1930s and 40s. Whilst right-wing, industrial productions suffered under their propagandist label, the documentary film genre as a whole developed an increasingly prominent social status that was expertly managed by artists on the left. As Jonathan Kahana explains, the documentary film was used as a mode of expression 'in which radicals and progressive intellectuals grappled with the problem of how cultural form and social action could be related,' as well as a mode that organised audiences 'in a hegemonic capacity, announcing crises and managing them on behalf of the state.'[170] These categories include far-left groups such as the Workers' Film and Photo League of America (WFPL) who sought to awaken the working class through unsophisticated films that relied on the fact of the event for their effectiveness, together with the basic power of sheer documentation. They generally shot 'footage' rather than films and covered politically charged events that often revolved around workers' strikes. Kahana's description also involves filmmakers such as Lorentz, who worked to rally their audiences around major national problems in which solutions could be found in the actions of the state.

Despite their different motives, both radical and governmental filmmakers rejected the aesthetics of Hollywood productions to create raw,

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[169] Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye*, p. 43

[170] Jonathan Kahana cited in, Jeffrey Geiger, *American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 88.

emotive pictures that reached out to audiences in ways that full length features could not. WFPL films, such as *Worker's Newsreel*, *Unemployment and National Hunger March 1931* (1931), and *Bonus March* (1932), counterbalanced a lack of cinematography with an emotional intensity and political commitment that mirrored the historical moment in which the films were made. They recorded the daily struggles of the unemployed through rough footage of breadlines, evictions, and nationwide protests. The hand-held, close-range angles of the camera allowed the audience to feel as though they were a part of the action, whilst the timely release of the films reinforced a sense of involvement.[171] Similarly, *The Plow* and *The River* sought to stir public emotion through powerful imagery of America's disadvantaged working class. Unlike the WFPL, however, Lorentz utilises a range of cinematic characteristics such as strong narratives, a surging musical score, and a heavy-handed voiceover. Rather than simply advocate for the New Deal, his films provided audiences with messages of direct action through government intervention. Corporate conservatives, who were seen by the public as being primarily concerned with saving their own reputations, could not compete with the images of hope that followed intentionally powerful scenes of crises. Very few documentary titles are on the National Film Registry, though the two

[171] For more on the Workers' Film and Photo League of America, see Geiger, *American Documentary Film*, pp. 86 – 120, Richard M. Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp, 146 – 156, and Mason Klein and Catherine Evans, *The Radical Camera: New York's Photo League, 1936 – 1951* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

Lorentz's films discussed here made the list.[172] There is a stark omission, however, of those produced by anti-New Dealers.[173]

Nevertheless, corporate conservatives would later benefit from the successes of 1930s documentary films as the genre continued to grow throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s. After damaging internal struggles, the WFPL later reorganised as Frontier Films and produced timely documentaries such as *Native Land* (1942), *People of the Cumberland* (1937), and *Heart of Spain* (1937).[174] The latter, which depicts the horrors of the

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[172] Films that are on the National Film Registry have been deemed 'culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.' As the National Film Preservation Board states, these films are not selected as the 'best' American films of all time, but as 'works of enduring importance to American culture.' For more on the National Film Registry, see: 'Film Registry'' *Library of Congress* [https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/], accessed 2 October 2018.

[173] Although this section focuses on Lorentz's films as a means of presenting a direct link to pro-New Deal propaganda (particularly those financed by the Roosevelt administration), it is also worth noting the existence of Hollywood productions in this subject. For example, Frank Capra produced a number of films during the 1930s and 1940s that depicted the struggle of the 'little man' against the power and corruption of urban industrialists, corporate lawyers, bankers, and crooked politicians. In films such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and *Meet John Doe*, the 'average Joe' eventually triumphs over the conspiracy of evil through honesty, goodness, and idealism. These full-length features presented powerful messages against big business during a time of economic hardship and a lack of trust in industry. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* can also be found on the National Film Registry alongside Lorentz's work. For more on Capra, see Glen Alan Phelps, 'The 'Populist' Films of Frank Capra,' *Journal of American Studies* 13:3 (1979), Ian Scott, 'Why we Fight and Projections of America: Frank Capra, Robert Riskin, and the Making of World War II Propaganda,' in *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), pp. 242 – 258, and Ian Scott, 'Populism, Pragmatism, and Political Reinvention: The Presidential Motif in the Films of Frank Capra,' in *Hollywood's White House: The American Presidency in Film and History*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), pp. 180 – 192.

[174] *Native Land* is a documentary film directed by Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand that depicts the struggles of trade unions against anti-labour corporations. It can be viewed online at 'Native Land,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLiIiKrR6oU]. Both Hurwitz and Strand were influential figures in the genre and later worked on the cinematography for *The Plow*. Hurwitz later produced *Verdict for Tomorrow* (1961), a documentary film on the trial of the infamous Nazi SS officer, Adolf Eichmann. People *of the Cumberland* depicts the economic and environmental devastation of rural

Spanish Civil War, utilised techniques that were later adopted by wartime filmmakers. The director aimed to influence the viewers' emotions through graphic scenes that showed the devastation of war on innocent civilians. Amongst the images, the film expressed a need for intervention to fight against the fascist forces whose bombs were causing immeasurable suffering. As Thomas Waugh explains, *Heart of Spain* was instrumental in the invention of the 'solidarity film' which became central to US documentary filmmaking during the Second World War. 'This rare archival film,' he states, 'was offered by the American Popular Front to the Loyalist effort and fashioned both as artistic testimony and political support for a struggle towards which the official U.S. neutrality was morally and politically unacceptable.'[175] The impact of such powerful messages, including those in the films by Lorentz, later influenced the work of major Hollywood companies. Walt Disney Studios, MGM, and Warner Bros were amongst those who produced an unprecedented number of propaganda films during the war in an effort to train, instruct, and persuade national audiences that their sacrifices were integral to the war effort. Many of these films mirrored the efforts of their predecessors in an attempt to form a wartime community spirit based on solidarity. Their successes, in turn, gave rise to a postwar boom in the production of nontheatrical films that greatly influenced the *Fun and Facts* team. These early developments also contributed to the progressive cinema vérité social documentaries of the

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Tennessee during the Depression; 'People of the Cumberland,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/people-of-the-cumberland-1937]. Lastly, *Heart of Spain* can be viewed online at 'Heart of Spain,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6odfz2wYG9A].

[175] Thomas Waugh, *The Right to Play Oneself: Looking Back on Documentary Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 58.

1960s, involving some of America's most distinguished filmmakers. As Richard Wormser argues, the success of the documentary genre during the 1950s and 1960s can be traced back to the visionaries of the interwar years, with both the WFPL and Lorentz taking the lead.[176]

Regardless of its best efforts, the business community failed to produce popular PR campaigns through the use of educational films that could rival the success of their competitors. The New Deal was very much alive and well and the reputation of America's leading corporate conservatives remained at an all-time low. Nevertheless, these efforts do provide an explanation to the origins of the *Fun and Facts* series through Sloan's venture into public relations. His first steps into this realm are reminiscent of his later partnership with George Benson. Barton's influence at GM signified the early cooperation between the corporate world and evangelicals that, for Sloan, culminated in Harding's educational series. His partnership with Barton, however, was only the beginning. Whilst the goodwill campaigns of the 'famous family' ushered Sloan closer, if only a fraction, to the public eye, it was the New Deal that

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[176] Richard Wormser, cited in 'The Roots of Social Issue Docs: Movement Born in the 1930s Came of Age in the 1960s,' *International Documentary Association* [https://www.documentary.org/feature/roots-social-issue-docs-movement-born-1930s-came-age-1960s], accessed 22 March 2019. Developments in the 1930s documentary film is a broad topic with a vast historiography. Further works include, Anthony Slide, *The New Historical Dictionary of the American Film Industry* (New York: Routledge, 1998), Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum, 2006), and Jonathan Kahana (ed.), *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). The importance of 1940s documentary films will be discussed in chapter three, as will the genre's impact on early Cold War films, including the *Fun and Facts* series. The 1960s is beyond the scope of this thesis, however it is worth noting the significance of 1930s documentary films on this particular decade given the rise of notable filmmakers such as Richard Leacock. For more information on this era, see Dave Saunders, *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the Sixties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and Christof Decker, 'Richard Leacock and the Origins of Direct Cinema: Reassessing the Idea of an Uncontrolled Cinema,' in *Memoirs of the Origins of Ethnographic Film*, ed. Beate Engelbrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 31 – 48.

provided the turning point. By the 1930s, the welfare of GM was directly intertwined with that of the nation and Sloan could no longer restrict his interests to the confines of his company. The Depression and subsequent New Deal instilled a sense of urgency that encouraged Sloan, and his associates, to intervene. However, Sloan remained reluctant to fight the New Deal publicly and continued, instead, to donate large sums of money to the production of corporate sponsored educational films in retaliation to the pro-labour policies of the Wagner Act. Unfortunately, the reputation of big business during the 1930s seemed irreversible. Whilst Americans continued to suffer through an economic crisis that industry, arguably, started, the propagandist messages within PR campaigns were ignored. The business community could not rectify its position during times of hardship. For these educational films to be successful, corporate leaders required two things: the prosperity that only the Second World War could generate and third-party organisations with no apparent connection to industry. In 1948, Sloan, having not lost hope, turned to Benson; the charismatic and pro-business leader of the Churches of Christ affiliated Harding College.

Chapter Two

George S. Benson: From Humble Beginnings to a Leader in Christian Education

In 1936, George Benson accepted the position of president at Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas. This marked the pinnacle of an extraordinary career in religious education that intertwined with both the political and business worlds. Benson's evangelicalism merged with his economic ideology concerning the free enterprise system and attracted the attention of influential conservatives, many of whom provided wealthy donations to Harding. Benson used these funds to rebuild the failing college, making it a popular institution during the 1950s and 60s, whilst embarking on a nation-wide propaganda campaign that showcased his own brand of Americanism – upholding faith in God, constitutional government, and the private ownership of the tools of production. Though Benson's most successful propaganda effort, *Fun and Facts*, is the focus of this thesis, it is important to first examine the events that led to its production. As such, this chapter will investigate Benson's life, pre-1950, in order to fully understand his views on religion, politics, and the economy, which in turn will shed light on the development of *Fun and Facts*.

Born in the Cheyenne-Arapaho Territory (now Dewey County) of Oklahoma in 1898, Benson had somewhat of an ordinary upbringing compared to that of his business partner, Alfred Sloan.[177] His parents, Stuart

[177] The following biographical information on Benson's has been collated from works such as, L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), John C. Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing: The Story of George S. Benson* (Searcy, AR: Harding University Press, 1991), Donald P. Garner, 'George S. Benson: Conservative, Anti-Communist, Pro-American Speaker' (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1963), and Ted M. Altman,

and Emma Benson, instilled the importance of self-reliance and hard work in their son from an early age in preparation for the challenges associated with life on the frontier. Conditions in the newly established settlement were harsh, particularly for farmers such as the Bensons. Periodic droughts hindered the growth of crops whilst the absence of the railroad prevented access to markets and hampered business development. Many initially lived in sod houses or dugouts and relied on the production of their own produce for sustenance.[178] As the eldest son, and of working age at eight years old, Benson was expected to work full-time on the family farm to support his parents through these tough times. Though the family owned two farming plots, money was always scarce and the young Benson began to hire himself out for odd jobs in the local community. He continued to work, both on the farm and for his neighbours, until he left home to begin his second year of high school at the U.S Government Indian School in Claremore, Oklahoma. To support himself, and to pay for his education, Benson took a job as the school's janitor. He did not have the liberty of dedicating himself fully to his education, unlike Sloan, and graduated from high school at the age of twenty-one. His childhood experience with work and education formed the foundation for his personal characteristics as an adult. He later reflected, 'I had the love and care of wonderful, God-fearing Christian parents, and they had done the first

'The Contributions of George Benson to Christian Education' (PhD Diss., North Texas State University, 1971).

[178] Further details on the opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Territory and the living conditions of its initial settlers can be found in, Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* sixth edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The History of Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), and 'Cheyenne-Arapaho Opening,' *Oklahoma Historical Society* [http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH031], accessed 19 June 2018.

groundwork, but the foundation that is laid only by the individual himself began to be laid in Claremore.' As he had demonstrated, 'anybody could get an education who wanted to work hard enough for it.'[179] Like many other Americans, Benson took in the gospel of self-help. He would later go on to help those who wished to do so, dedicating his life to the teachings of the Gospel that dominated his early beginnings.

With strict religious parents, Benson was deeply influenced by an evangelical message and devoted much of his life to spreading the missionary cause. Though his family attended a nondenominational community church when he was a child, Benson joined the Methodists at the age of sixteen. This provided him with the opportunity to teach at the local Bible school whilst acting as the superintendent of the Sunday school. However, as Ted Altman argues, it was not the denomination that attracted Benson to religious education, but the Bible.[180] It was Benson's devotion to the Word of God that inspired his passion for preaching. As he later explained, 'My dedication to the Lord began in early life. I decided that I was going to serve the Lord and make that my major goal regardless of where it might lead me or what work it might require.'[181]

These feelings intensified when, in 1916, Benson was introduced to Ben Elston, a travelling evangelist from a town in western Kansas near Harper College. Elston, a member of the Churches of Christ, preached a

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[179] George Benson cited in, Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 3.
[180] Altman, 'The Contributions of George Benson to Christian Education,' p. 6.
[181] Benson's notes for Harding's Oral History Project, undated, box B-001, folder: Oral History Project, Benson Papers, Ann Cowan Dixon Archives & Special Collections, Brackett Library, Harding University, p. 3 (hereafter, Benson Papers).

nondenominational Christianity based upon the Bible, not on creeds or religious doctrines that were not clearly stated in the Scripture. Despite its rejection of organised religion, the Churches of Christ was, and remains to this day, a fully-fledged denomination with 1.1 million members as of 2018.[182] It continues to preach nondenominational, restorationist, Christianity, with its most widely distributed tract stating:

> the Church of Christ is neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish. We are unique and different for we are endeavouring to go all the way back to the original New Testament church. Using the New Testament as our blueprint we have re-established in the twentieth century Christ's Church. It fits no modern label. It is not just another denomination.[183]

This notion of the restoration of primitive Christianity – the attempt to recover the Christian faith as it was believed and practised in the first century – is a defining characteristic of the Churches of Christ.[184] It appealed to a young and impressionable Benson whose dedication lay with the Bible, not with his Methodist denomination. Together with restorationism and the centrality of the Bible, the Churches of Christ, like other evangelicals, emphasise 'the death and resurrection of Jesus, the necessity of individual conversion, and spreading the faith through missions.'[185] As a form of 'militantly, anti-

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[182] 'Churches of Christ in the United States: Statistical Summary by State/Territory,' *21st Century Christian* [https://www.21stcc.com/pdfs/ccusa_stats_sheet.pdf], accessed 20 June 2018.
[183] Batsell Barrett Baxter and Carroll Ellis, 'Neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jew' (Nashville: Hillsboro Church of Christ, n.d.), p. 12 in, Richard Thomas Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 4.
[184] Further information on Restorationism and the Churches of Christ can be found in, Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Joplin, MI: College Press, 2002), and Edward P. Myers 'Churches of Christ (A Capella): Are We Evangelical?,' in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. William R. Baker (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 50 – 70.
[185] Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. x.

modernist Protestant evangelicalism', the Churches of Christ is fundamentalist.[186]

Elston's ideas reached Benson who, at the time, was confused with the numerous denominations visiting his school. He later recalled:

> "How do I know which one is best?" I thought, "Well, I'm going to study the creeds all of them and I'm going to decide which one of them is the best." Well I listened to Elston preach and I saw I didn't need to do it that way. I could just take the Bible and work through the Biblical pattern of the Lord's church.[187]

In discussing the experience with Ted Altman, Benson elaborated, 'As I listened to him and closely followed his discussion about the undenominational aspects of the church and the restoration of the New Testament church, I became very interested . . . That winter, I was baptised into the church of the Lord.' The following year, at the age of 17, Benson was officially baptised into the Churches of Christ, marking a turning point in the direction of his religious life.

Following Elston's advice on further education, Benson enrolled at Harper College in 1921. Here, faculty trained students to preach, and the students began to do so whilst still in school, making it the ideal institution for Benson. After only one month of study, Benson began speaking at a small church every Sunday. His religious training flourished at Harper, as did his passion for the missionary cause. There was a strong interest in missionary

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[186] George Marsden's definition of fundamentalism in, George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* new edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 2. There is a wealth of research in the area of Christian fundamentalism. Notable works include those from Marsden as well as, Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800 – 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) and Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For a more recent study, see: Sutton, *American Apocalypse*.

[187] Benson cited in, Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 4.

work among his peers and Benson soon formed a study group with like-minded students who sought to preach the Gospel to the rest of the world. They would often study maps and compile information on countries that were deemed most 'needy.' Benson later narrowed his options down to China arguing that it had 'about one fourth of all the people in the world and at that time, we didn't have a single church missionary in China.'[188]

As a member of the Churches of Christ, however, Benson's adventurous missionary ambitions seemed unusual. As he later recalled to his Harding successor, Clifton Ganus:

> there was, among the Churches of Christ, very little missionary zeal. There wasn't a single one of our colleges giving a single course on missions, and you rarely heard a preacher preach on missions . . . Nearly everybody wanted to dissuade me . . . When I began seeking support, that was very hard to come by and contributions were very small.[189]

The anti-missionary stance of the Churches of Christ was a surprising trait during a period that witnessed a growth in missionary appeal. Protestant missionaries began arriving in China in the early 1800s, with greater expansion from 1860 to 1900. By 1925, their numbers totalled 8,000. A small but significant part of this explosion in missionary work in the Far East included preachers from the Stone-Campbell tradition. However, this did not include the Churches of Christ.[190] It was the more mainline Disciples of Christ that dominated the missionary field with the establishment of fourteen

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[188] 'George Benson, interview by Clifton L. Ganus, Part 1., 25 February 1969,' *Harding Digital Archives* [https://brackettarchives.omeka.net/items/show/8], accessed 6 September 2017.
[189] Ibid.
[190] The Churches of Christ was one of the denominations to develop out of the Stone-Campbell movement. In 1906, the denomination was divided over the issue of postmillennialism and those who left formed the Disciples of Christ.

congregations by 1925. At its highest point in 1926, the denomination supported sixty-four missionaries in China.[191]

With little interest in missionary work, the Churches of Christ had no missionaries in China. Benson, and his wife Sally Ellis (formerly, Hockaday), would be the first to undertake such work in the Far East on behalf of the denomination. They would later be joined by Benson's former classmate Lewis T. Oldman and his wife Grace in 1927. Benson and Oldman were influenced by Churches of Christ member Don Carlos Janes who, despite opposition from the denomination, frequently attempted to generate interest in foreign missions. The reasons for the rejection of missionary work from the Churches of Christ, as well as Janes' uncharacteristic break from this position, are unclear. Janes' enthusiasm, however, was contagious amongst the new generation of members. The number of missionaries from the Churches of Christ had increased from 8 in 1892 to 32 by 1926.[192] It is likely that Benson and Oldman chose to work in China based on Janes' publications that often

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[191] Stephen V. Crowder, *The Field is the World: A History of the Canton Mission (1929 – 1949) of the Churches of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), pp. xxv – xxvi. Notable works on the wider missionary field and those in China include, Kevin Xiyi Yao, 'The North China Theological Seminary: Evangelical Theological Education in China in the Early 1900s,' in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, eds. Ogbu U. Kalu and Alaine Low (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), pp. 187 – 204, Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), and Dana L. Robert*, Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). It is also interesting to note that despite the expansion in Protestant missionary work, there were small conservative Baptist churches that shared the views of the Churches of Christ. For example, the Primitive Baptists who believed that attempts to evangelise was an infringement of God's divine plan to elect certain individuals for salvation. These views revolved around the preservation of Calvinism. For more, see Anthony L. Chute, *A Piety Above the Common Standard: Jesse Mercer and the Defence of Evangelistic Calvinism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004).

[192] Douglas Foster, Anthony Dunnavant, Paul Blowers, and D. Newell Williams (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), p. 425.

advertised the country as 'ready for the Gospel.'[193] After four years of further education and religious training, the Benson's heeded Janes' calling and left America for China in 1925.

To an outsider, the decision to embark on a foreign mission to China during the mid-1920s would have seemed absurd. Political unrest had defined the country since the inception of the Chinese Republic in 1912, however, conditions deteriorated during the 1920s as a result of famine and a growth in independent provinces. In 1925, the newly appointed leader of the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) party, Chiang Kai-Shek, sought to unify the country with the aid of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Despite their political differences, both the KMT and the CCP advocated for the reunification of China. The First United Front Alliance was formed, and violence swept the nation in an attempt to eradicate warlord power.[194]

The Bensons, who had initially arrived in Hong Kong, avoided much of the initial violence. They did, however, witness the strong anti-foreign sentiment sweeping the nation. Anti-imperialism constituted a major aspect of extreme Chinese nationalism during the 1920s after years of foreign aggression from the Japanese and the West.[195] Under the influence of the

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[193] Crowder, *The Field is the World*, pp. 1 – 2.

[194] Further information on the political conditions of 1920s China can be found in, Mechthild Leutner, Roland Fleber, Mikhail Titarenko, and Alexander Grigoriev (eds.), *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between Triumph and Disaster* (London: Routledge, 2002). For the rise of nationalism and the KMT see, C. X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu (eds.), *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) and Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925 – 1945* (London: Routledge, 2003). For the rise of the Chinese Communist Party, see S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made: Communism in Shanghai, 1920 – 1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

[195] Wayne Flynt and Gerald Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850 – 1950* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), pp. 290.

Soviet Union and the CCP, the United Front Alliance instigated a pro-nationalist agenda that engulfed a substantial part of the Protestant World in China. As the Bensons rode through the streets of Hong Kong, they were confronted with signs that, in the Chinese language, equated to slogans such as 'Yankees Go Home!', and 'Missionaries Get Out!' The situation was far worse for missionaries on the Chinese mainland, many of whom encountered the Benson's on their search for sanctuary in Hong Kong. Among those fleeing was the W. G. Smiths, a family of independent missionaries from the Kwing Si Providence in Southern China. They provided assistance to the Bensons and advised them to stay in Hong Kong until the dangers had settled. Once it was safe to travel, they offered to take the Bensons with them to their establishment in Kwei Hsien, 500 miles into the interior.

The Benson's first six months in Kwei Hsien were relatively successful. They lived and worked at the Faith and Love Mission, an orphanage that delivered care for sixty-five blind children.[196] The Smiths continued to offer their support, sharing their knowledge of Chinese missionary work with the Bensons. It was the perfect opportunity for experience. George and Sally planned to open their own Bible school once they had become accustomed to the culture and were proficient in the language. Their progress was halted, however, when anti-foreign sentiment reached Kwei Hsien in the Spring of 1926. Influenced by the KMT and Soviet sympathisers, a mob of students and soldiers descended on the Benson's, chanting, 'Kill the foreign Devils.' Whilst the anti-foreign sentiment was a product of the United Front Alliance, missionaries were quick to view the KMT, and Chinese nationalism in general,

[196] Crowder, *The Field is the World*, p. 4.

through the prism of Russian bolshevism. Dubbed 'the Red General', Kai-Shek had visited Russia on a number of occasions in the early 1920s and so the political turmoil was almost entirely attributable to a Soviet-directed Communist conspiracy.[197] Benson shared this view, choosing to focus on the Communists in particular. He later recalled, 'the Communists started moving in at that time and started agitating against all foreigners.'[198] He considered the Communists 'deceitful', describing how they successfully branded foreign missionaries as the enemy by blaming them for China's poverty. As the threat of physical violence intensified, friendly local officials encouraged the Benson's to flee. They did so, making a perilous journey through Nationalist held territory to make it back to Hong Kong.

The consequences of the political turmoil against foreign missionaries soon reached national newspapers in the US. On 23 January 1927, the *Washington Post* printed the headline 'Attacks Against Americans and Europeans Aided by Armed Forces Crying, "China for Chinese."'[199] In March, Nationalist troops reached the city of Nanking and initiated large-scale attacks against the foreign presence. Robberies and looting occurred at foreign consulates, residences, churches, missionary schools, and businesses. Some foreigners were even killed, including J. E. Williams, the vice president

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[197] Robert Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918 – 1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), pp. 54 - 55. Although Wright's study focuses on Canadian missionaries, many American's, and most notably Benson, shared the same view regarding the KMT and its Soviet influence.

[198] 'George Benson, interview by Clifton L. Ganus, Part 2., 25 February 1969,' *Harding Digital Archives* [https://brackettarchives.omeka.net/items/show/13, accessed 6 September 2017.

[199] Anonymous, 'Foreigners Keep Up Flight from Interior of China,' *Washington Post*, 23 January 1927, p. 1.

of Nanking University, who was shot by undisciplined soldiers.[200] In covering what became known as the Nanjing (Nanking) Incident, the *New York Times* published a report on the violence in the region from a Nanking missionary group that read:

> Foreigners are steadily being forced out of all parts of China under Nationalist control and the Government, despite all its assurance, either is unable or unwilling to alter the situation.
>
> The same facts are true regarding opposition to Christianity. The Christian religion is persistently and systematically attacked, its leaders are being maligned and persecuted, it properties are being destroyed, looted and seized and no power or influence appears to check this condition.[201]

The situation across China continued to deteriorate throughout 1927, placing foreign settlers in serious danger from physical attacks. As a result, all but a handful of missionaries fled to the coast. Over two thousand returned home with many deciding never to return.[202]

The anti-foreign violence of the 1920s had shaken the missionary field to its core, leaving a profound impact on Benson. As Ted M. Altman argues, the Bensons learnt great lessons in China, lessons 'that were to shape the future course of individuals and institutions in America whose lives he had touched and influenced.'[203] In China, he saw a heathen land filled with great poverty. He was introduced to what he labelled 'the treachery of Communism'; an anti-Christ, anti-God organisation that undermined what little strength

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[200] Boalin Jiang, 'Christian Colleges amid Political Changes: The University of Nanking's Reorganisation and Registration (1927 – 1928),' *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 10:1 (2016), pp. 23 – 24 and Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, p. 112.

[201] Anonymous, 'Nationalists Draw Missionaries' Fire,' *New York Times*, 8 May 1927, p. 20. Interestingly, the *New York Times* focused on the Nationalist inspired violence against the missionaries, with no mention of the CCP in its article. As the leading party, the KMT was the dominant force behind the political turmoil.

[202] Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, p. 112.

[203] Altman, 'The Contributions of George Benson to Christian Education,' p. 24.

remained in the Chinese government and manipulated its people with deceptive cunning.[204] In contrast, the American people were blessed. Benson developed a rejuvenated appreciation for his home country. He recognised that individual freedom, backed by the democratic institutions of a republic, was mankind's greatest blessing. His experiences in China would later shape his interwar activities at Harding, transforming him from a humble missionary to one of the nation's leading educators and a producer of pro-American propaganda.

In 1929, the Bensons returned to China, settling in Canton. Though pockets of anti-foreign sentiment still existed on the mainland, Benson's missionary work was far more successful in Canton than it was in Kwei Hsien. The threat from the United Front Alliance was no longer a concern when in 1927, the KMT initiated a purge of the Communists on the orders of Kai-Shek. Its members dwindled, dropping from 60,000 in 1927 to fewer than 10,000 just one year later. [205] As the CCP was the largest political group opposed to Christianity, its demise was a blessing to foreign missionaries. The Nationalist government was far less radical in its stance towards religion and many of the missionaries who had fled in 1926 – 1927 returned in 1928 – 1929, approximately 6,000 of them.[206] There were, however, certain restrictions placed upon foreign Christian schools under the new Chinese leadership. The Ministry of Education prohibited any religious activity in primary schools and insisted all middle schools and colleges register their institutions with the

[204] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 6.
[205] 'Internal Strife in China,' *Facing History* [https://www.facinghistory.org/nanjing-atrocities/nation-building/internal-strife-china], accessed 25 June 2018.
[206] Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, p. 124.

government. Graduates from unregistered schools would not be granted the same rights and privileges as those from registered intuitions. For example, these students would be prohibited from voting, applying for government positions, and receiving government scholarships. As Lawrence D. Kessler explains, missionaries were divided on how to respond to the series of registration regulations.[207] There were those who found it difficult to accept the restrictions on religious instruction and preferred to close their schools rather than conform to government policy. The majority of missionaries opted to follow the new restrictions in an effort to continue providing Christian education to Chinese citizens, at least from middle school upwards. By 1920, around 70 percent of the approximately 200 Christian middle schools in China had registered or were in the process of doing so.[208] The Bensons and Oldmans were amongst those willing to conform to the new rules. Their mission to protect China from the influence of Communism through the teachings of the Bible remained a top priority.

In searching for a location to open a Bible school, the Bensons and Oldmans discovered that there were already more than a hundred different missionary societies now working in China and that virtually every section of the coastal areas had been 'claimed' by one or more missionary groups.[209] Canton, however, remained relatively untouched as missionaries were afraid to travel far into the mainland. Benson saw this as an opportunity, creating the Canton Mission with the Oldmans in 1929. Through the adoption of a

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[207] Lawrence D. Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895 – 1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 85.
[208] Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station,* p. 86.
[209] Crowder, *The Field is the World*, p. 14.

threefold strategy involving the creation of Chinese literature, Bible training, and active evangelistic work, the Canton Mission established its first church in the centre of the city before moving to new villages. This approach ensured its success until the Canton Mission churches were forced to close at the hands of the Communists in 1949.

During the construction of the Canton Bible School, Benson returned to the US where he enrolled at the University of Chicago in 1930 to study East Asian History. He believed that with further study of the history and customs of China, he would be better equipped to educate its citizens. Evidently, education was an important tool for Benson, not only for himself, but also in disseminating his beliefs to others. His dedication to the teaching of others was apparent in China, where he planned to settle for a 'lifetime of work.'[210] This was his initial response to J. N. Armstrong when in 1936, the President of Harding College asked him to return to the US to take up the leadership of the school. Benson had first caught the attention of Armstrong during his time at Harper. As the president of the college, Armstrong observed the missionary zeal and leadership qualities Benson had and was impressed with his dedication to religious education. After learning of Benson's activities in China, Armstrong believed he had found a successor.[211] On 3 March, he wrote to Benson, who had returned to Canton, stating:

> There has never been a man within my knowledge that I would as soon to turn my mantle to. We have some fine 'boys' in the vineyard, but I believe in your vision, your unselfishness, and your faithfulness to the word of the Lord.[212]

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[210] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 109.
[211] Altman, 'The Contributions of George Benson to Christian Education,' p. 41.
[212] Armstrong to Benson, letter, 3 March 1936, box B-001, folder: correspondence with J. N. Armstrong about presidency, 1932 - 1936, Benson Papers.

However, Benson was hesitant to leave China. His fellow workers in Canton, and former students of Harding college, urged him to accept the position. They argued that more workers were needed in the Chinese mission field, and that if he returned as President of Harding, he could train and encourage students to travel to the Far East for work.[213] Armstrong agreed, adding in his letter 'It is likely that in one year you can put some fine pair of Christians in the work there.'[214] Benson recognised the need for more workers in China. Reflecting on his decision process, he recalled:

> At that time, we had not a single course in a single one of our colleges on missions. Consequently, our missionaries were going out unprepared, and half of them were coming home within less than three years and home to stay. So, I finally decided I would accept the invitation and would undertake to develop courses in Missions and also to encourage work in Missions in our other Christian colleges.[215]

With the benefits of religious education in mind, the Benson's returned to the US to embark on a new project in Searcy, Arkansas.

When Benson agreed to accept the position of President at Harding, he could not have predicted just how far his career would propel him into the realms of politics and the economy. Though he was eager to establish missionary courses, he first had to deal with Harding's difficult financial situation. In 1934, the college acquired the Galloway College property in Searcy from the Methodist Church for $75,000.[216] This appeared to be a bargain price, however by 1936 Harding had failed to make any substantial payments towards the initial cost, or the added interest. Therefore, Benson

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[213] Benson's notes for Harding's Oral History Project, p. 7.
[214] Armstrong to Benson, letter, 3 March 1936.
[215] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 14.
[216] Ibid, p. 15. There appears to be conflicting figures regarding Harding's debt between Hicks and Armstrong as the paragraph shows.

inherited a debt of $67,400 with payments of $4,000 a year including interest.[217]

Consequently, his immediate aims for the college changed. His new primary goals were: '(1) to attain North Central Association accreditation, (2) to pay off the debt and to add to the college plant, (3) to increase salaries and build a stronger faculty, and (4) to retain this dedicated faculty, with its deep spiritual commitment to cultivating genuinely Christian character in students.'[218] To achieve this, Benson began a difficult fundraising campaign that would soon become a national success for both himself and Harding, despite its humble beginnings. It was a task that Armstrong believed suited Benson's passion for Christian education.[219]

Benson's first step was to appeal to the citizens of Searcy, as well as the Churches of Christ. Although he managed to raise $17,000, an impressive feat during the Depression era, Benson faced significant hurdles with local churches due to a continuing controversy that surrounded his predecessor. Whilst at Harding, Armstrong's reputation fell dramatically within the Churches of Christ due to his stance on premillennialism.[220] In 1934, Armstrong refused to side with other Churches of Christ college presidents in their condemnation

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[217] Armstrong to Benson, letter, 3 March 1936.
[218] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 15.
[219] Armstrong to Benson, letter, 3 March 1936.
[220] Premillennialism holds to the idea that a period of peace will begin with the Second Coming of Christ. It is based upon a literal interpretation Revelation 20:1-6 – a Biblical passage that describes Jesus Christ throwing the Devil and his believers into a pit for a thousand years, marking the beginning of a millennium of peace. Postmillennialism, on the other hand, is the belief that a period of one thousand years of peace will take place before the Second Coming of Christ. Postmillennialism was the dominant force within the Churches of Christ. See, Timothy Weber, 'Premillennialism and the Branches of Evangelicalism,' in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, and Sutton, *American Apocalypse*.

of the premillennialist stance, casting doubt on his allegiance to the church. Due to the rising criticism, Armstrong later declared his rejection to certain tenants of dispensational premillennialism but did not deny his apocalyptic worldview.[221] As Richard Thomas Hughes argues, this left the door wide open for his enemies to pursue his destruction, which would ultimately leave lasting effects on Benson and Harding College.[222]

Tensions between premillennialists and postmillennialists date back to the beginnings of the Churches of Christ during the Restoration movement of the early nineteenth century. Led by Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, the Churches of Christ began as a thriving religious movement that greatly appealed to Christians on the frontier. As Hughes describes it, Stone and Campbell believed that 'the restoration of primitive Christianity would provide a solid foundation for the unification of Christians not only in America but throughout the world.'[223] However, factions began to appear due to the fundamental differences between Stone and Campbell. In *American Apocalypse*, Matthew Sutton explains how most nineteenth century Protestants felt optimistic about the future and longed for the coming millennium; a thousand-year period of peace, prosperity, and righteousness, which they hoped to inaugurate through their own good deeds.[224] The second coming of Christ would then conclude the millennium. It was this

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[221] As Richard T. Hughes explains there is a difference between premillennialism and an apocalyptic world view. Whereas premillennialism signifies how the millennial age will come, an apocalyptic outlook signifies a commitment to live one's life as if the final rule of the Kingdom of God is already present. See, Richard T. Hughes, *The Churches of Christ* student edition (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), pp. 6-7.
[222] Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, p. 161.
[223] Hughes, *The Churches of Christ*, p. 5.
[224] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, p. 14.

postmillennialist stance that Campbell, and many of his followers, adhered to. A few others identified as amillennialists, believing that the millennium was more metaphorical than literal.

Stone, on the other hand, subscribed to an apocalyptic world view and fell into the premillennialist camp. Sutton describes premillennialists as 'a group of radical white evangelicals' who kept a sceptical eye on the events unfolding around them.[225] With the rise of the modern university system, increasing urbanisation, political turmoil, and the Civil War, premillennialists argued that their way of life was under threat. Ultimately, they believed they were living in the end times; a period that would precede the battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ. This pessimistic worldview was a stark contrast to that of the optimistic postmillennialists. The tensions that grew from these differences eventually led to the division of the Churches of Christ in 1906. Campbell and the Churches of Christ retained their postmillennialist views, whilst Stone and his followers formed the Disciples of Christ with their premillennialist stance.[226]

As a matter that divided the Churches of Christ, it is unsurprising that Armstrong's position resulted in such controversy – and his eventual resignation. When Benson took over as president of Harding in 1936, members of the church hoped he would steer the college away from the premillennialist leanings of Armstrong by, first and foremost, firing his former

[225] Ibid, pp. 14 – 15.
[226] Hughes, *The Churches of Christ*, pp. 9 – 10. Further information on the origins of the Churches of Christ and the tensions between premillennialism and postmillennialism can be found in, Foster, Dunnavant, Blowers, and Williams (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas A. Foster, *The Story of the Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2013), and Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*.

teacher and close friend. Benson's own position within this controversy is unclear. Hicks believes Benson was a strong proponent of Restoration theology, echoing both its rationalistic and postmillennial sentiments.[227] However, Hughes, and more recently Robbie Maxwell, argue that he was in fact influenced by the premillennialism of Armstrong, though he began to slowly move away from this upon his return to this US.[228] Instead, he adopted a stridently patriotic, pro-capitalist, and anti-Communist perspective influenced by experiences in China. Regardless of his views, Benson refused to fire Armstrong. The decision not to do so angered members of the church, many of whom had already made the decision not to financially support Harding on the eve of Armstrong's resignation. This forced Benson to look elsewhere for donations to save the college. Unbeknownst to the church, his new campaign strategy would combine right-wing politics with Christian patriotism and separate Harding from the premillennial leanings previously instilled by Armstrong and fervently opposed by the Churches of Christ.

Rejected by the upper echelons of the denomination's hierarchy, Benson turned to wealthy individuals within the Churches of Christ. He knew certain members did not care for the premillennialist controversy and they became his new targets. The most influential of these was Clinton Davidson, a former graduate of Harding College. By the 1930s, Davidson was a successful businessman. Inspired by the Bible, which he used as a finance manual, he created his fortune as a life insurance salesman for wealthy New Yorkers. On the eve of Armstrong's resignation, Davidson visited the college

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[227] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 18.
[228] Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, p. 156. And Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation,' p. 113.

and offered an initial donation of $5,000. Armstrong rejected it, explaining that he would soon be replaced by Benson and so Davidson would have to discuss monetary matters with the new president. Nevertheless, during this meeting, Armstrong brought up a subject that would greatly benefit Harding:

> 'Clinton, through your contacts could you get some very important men – presidents of large corporations – to come to Harding and make speeches?' – Armstrong.
> 'Yes, I think I Can' – Davidson.
> 'If you can, we can get instructors and professors from all over the state to come to our auditorium and hear them.' – Armstrong.[229]

Armstrong thought of this idea as a means to raise the academic respectability of Harding, rather than as a source of financial contributions.[230] When Benson succeeded the presidency, he would take Armstrong's plan and apply it to the latter. Though he would always place the needs of the college first, Benson discovered that his ideas surrounding Christian education could have a much larger impact.

In 1936, Davidson approached Benson with a $10,000 proposition. As Benson recalled, 'He offered to make a contribution of $10,000 or to use the $10,000 in launching and helping direct a financial campaign. All of us favoured the latter.'[231] Unfortunately, Harding lacked the wide reputation needed for such a small-scale fundraising campaign to succeed and the effort was labelled a 'complete failure.' Regardless of the outcome of this initial attempt, Benson's link to Davidson proved to be fruitful in the long run. Davidson's powerful contacts enabled Benson to stumble into an activity that

[229] Armstrong to Clinton cited in, Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 128.
[230] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 128.
[231] Benson's notes, undated, box B-001, folder: Autobiographies, Benson Papers, p. 2.

'did make for us friends that could underwrite a successful financial campaign.'[232] These 'friends' would be instrumental in both Benson and Harding's success in an era defined by the financial difficulties of the Great Depression.

When Benson returned to the US in 1936, the country appeared remarkably different from what it had been in the mid-1920s. The second phase of the New Deal had been implemented with the passing of large-scale legislations such as the Works Progress Administration, the Social Security Act, and the infamous Wagner Act. Tensions between working-class Americans and the business elite were at their highest. The prosperous decade of the 1920s had ended. 'I came back to the United States and accepted the Presidency of Harding College', Benson recalled, 'in the middle of the Great Depression which most of our current generation never experienced.'[233]

For Arkansas, however, economic hardships began long before the Depression. During the 1920s, the state embarked upon modern diversification and market integration through the construction of railroads and the creation of new manufacturing and processing plants. The progressive attitude of its citizens encouraged optimism for Arkansas' future. It is, perhaps, this positive outlook that remained with Benson during his time in China and made the conditions of the Depression appear far greater upon his return. In reality, Arkansas suffered during the apparent national prosperity of the 1920s. Eighty percent of its population lived on farms or villages and relied heavily on

[232] Ibid, p. 2.
[233] Ibid, p. 9.

the agricultural sector. The Depression of 1920 – 1921 had a devasting effect on the price of cotton and farmers struggled to recover for the remainder of the decade, relying on the federal government to provide solutions to their chronic problems. To make matters worse, a large-scale flood damaged large sections of the state in 1927, followed by a drought in 1930 – 1931. Conditions in Arkansas were anything but prosperous during the nation's economic boom.[234]

By 1931, Arkansas was facing a crisis of enormous proportions. The ongoing effects of the natural disasters coupled with a nation-wide economic crash left the state with limited resources and without basic provisions. Charity relief poured into the area from neighbouring states as one-third of the Arkansas population faced starvation. The Red Cross reported that by February, it was feeding more than half a million Arkansans. In some counties, almost every family was dependent on Red Cross rations. By September 1922, 15 percent of all families were on the federal relief roll, one of the highest percentages in the nation.[235] In regard to unemployment, Arkansas had lost 35,000 from its industrial workforce between 1930 and 1932.[236] Yet amid this crisis, President Hoover clung to his belief that:

> It is not the function of the Government to relieve individuals of their responsibilities to their neighbours, or to relieve private institutions of their responsibilities to the public, or the

[234] The economic conditions of Arkansas during the 1920s and 1930s are detailed in works such as, Jeannie M. Whayne, Thomas A. Deblack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold, *Arkansas: A Narrative History* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930 – 1999* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), and Gail S. Murray, 'Forty Years Ago: The Great Depression Comes to Arkansas,' *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 29:4 (1970), pp. 291 – 312.
[235] Donald Holley, 'Arkansas in the Great Depression,' *Historical Report of the Secretary of State* (1978), pp. 157 – 160.
[236] Murray, 'Forty Years Ago: The Great Depression Comes to Arkansas,' pp. 306.

> local government to the States, or the responsibilities of State governments to the Federal Government.[237]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Arkansans voted overwhelmingly for Roosevelt in the 1932 election.[238] With the introduction of the New Deal, Arkansas received relief from several of its programs including the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Works Progress Administration. [239] Furthermore, the NIRA and the Wagner Act mobilised workers and encouraged strike action amongst those suffering the most under the conditions of the Depression. In particular, agricultural workers banded together to form the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The union advocated for higher wagers under its socialist leader, H. L. Mitchell, who announced in 1936 that cotton choppers would not enter the field for less than one dollar a day. A number of successful strikes followed Mitchell's statement.[240] During the strike wave of 1937, 4,799 workers participated in 15 strikes across Arkansas.[241] Whilst this number is significantly lower than that of the larger

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[237] 'Herbert Hoover: Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination (1932),' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=23198], accessed 26 June 2018.

[238] Roosevelt won 86.3 per cent of the vote in Arkansas during the 1932 election. Statistics can be found at, 'Election of 1932,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1932], accessed 26 June 2018.

[239] Details on the use of New Deal programs in Arkansas can be found in, Whayne, Deblack, Sabo III, and Arnold, *Arkansas: A Narrative History* and Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930 – 1999*, pp. 323 – 329.

[240] Statistics on the labour movement in Arkansas are difficult to locate. For general information see, Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930 – 1999*, pp. 23 – 33 and Donald Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). For the wider implications of the New Deal on the labour movement in the South, see Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), pp. 83 – 102.

[241] United States Department of Labour & Bureau of Labour Statistics, 'Analysis of Strikes in 1937,' *Monthly Labour Review* (1938), p. 7.

states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, it is evidence of the far-reaching effects of the pro-labour policies of the New Deal. By the time Benson arrived in Arkansas, the poverty-stricken state was reliant on government intervention and attracted to the promises of organised labour.

To Benson, the situation was critical. The self-reliant frontier individualism, the source of 'America's greatness,' was under threat from the social welfare reforms of the New Deal. As he later observed:

> when railroads were scarce, and neighbors were neighbors indeed, nobody felt underprivileged so long as he had the right to work hard, save money and use his wits to make his wealth work for him. American character in those days included industry, frugality, and ingenuity, honesty, liberality and pride in economic independence … People were relatively poor in those days, but one small 'poor farm' in every county took care of persons not able to provide for themselves and their own. Children cared for aged parents and, in times of distress, one another. Incompetence was considered shameful. But that changed between 1930 and 1940. Since then countless people have shunted off their dependents on the government, and even men with jobs have been known to go on relief so they could subsist in idleness. Such dependents never have constituted a really large class, but its existence has been a reproach to the sturdy, self-reliant American character.[242]

This change in American character, Benson argued, altered the perceptions of the working class towards industry and damaged the reputation of big business. In describing the Depression, he later recalled:

> Our people were very unhappy about the long, continuing nature of the depression. They were being told by some political leaders that the hardships and the poverty and the distress was due to the profiteering of big business. In fact, big businessmen were referred to as 'economic royalists,' 'profiteers' and 'coupon clippers.'[243]

[242] Benson's notes undated, p. 3.
[243] Ibid, p. 1.

This analysis did not sit well with Benson. He had long admired the business elite, believing they were responsible for the nation's economic growth. Their societal position also conveyed his frontier values of hard work and sacrifice. From this perspective, 'businessmen like Henry Ford, the du Ponts, and Henry Kaiser' ('men of vision, courage and initiative') decided their own destiny through their determination to make it to the top. Likewise, those at the other end of the economic scale, including the 'swarm of idle poor' that emerged in the 1930s, must accept responsibility for their own position. As Maxwell argues, the New Deal upset the natural order and Benson's own view that hard work produced results; as demonstrated by his own experiences.[244]

As such, Benson argued that the economy represented one of the three major planks that formed the foundations on which America had been built. In his own words,

> Faith in God was the foundation rock on which we built character and honour. A Constitution made the government the servant of the people and assured the freedom of individuals. Then private enterprise, allowing ownership of land and businesses, allowed a man to dream his dream and set about to fulfil it. That's why America rapidly became foremost among the nations of the world.[245]

This was Benson's own brand of Americanism and the focus of his anti-New Deal campaign of the 1930s and 1940s. America, he argued, was blaming the economic crisis on the very people it so desperately needed. The private enterprise system was an integral part of the nation's heritage and, as he had witnessed in China, without big businesses, the country was susceptible to

[244] Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation,' p. 4.
[245] Benson's notes, undated, p. 7.

Communism.[246] In a stark warning, 'Socialism,' Benson claimed, was already 'knocking at the nation's front door.'[247]

Benson's attitudes towards New Deal liberalism and the threat of Communism resonated with corporate conservatives who had already begun their fight before Benson had returned to the US. Meanwhile, his dedication to the Gospel and Christian education appealed to many of his fellow college presidents. Using Davidson's connections, the opportunities for fundraising in both of these areas came pouring in. The first of Harding's early donations came from Benson's former acquaintance, George Pepperdine.[248] The Californian businessman was also one of Davidson's contacts and so the two appealed to Pepperdine's generosity in funding Christian education. According to Darren Dochuk, Pepperdine agreed to make a donation of $25,000 to Harding if Benson helped to bring 'Head, Heart, and Hand' pedagogy to Southern California.[249] To Pepperdine, this educational philosophy was the only way to raise a generation of Americans that would mobilise against 'the sinister influences of New Deal liberalism' and bridge the

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[246] Benson's notes for Harding's Oral History Project, p. 10.
[247] Benson cited in, Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 27.
[248] Benson and Pepperdine had previously met in Hong Kong whilst missionaries were fleeing mainland China. Pepperdine represented the link between business conservatism and evangelicalism as the president of the Western Auto Supply Company of California and founder of the Christian college, Pepperdine University. During a world tour in the 1920s, Pepperdine became acquainted with Benson and provided financial support for a three-month missionary trip to the Philippines, which Benson accepted. The encounter provided a useful contact for Benson's future fundraising campaigns. For further information on Pepperdine and Christian education see, Robert E. Hooper, 'Higher Education Among Churches of Christ,' in *Religious Education in the United States*, eds. Thomas Hunt and James Carper (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1996), Richard T. Hughes, 'Faith and Learning at Pepperdine University,' in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), and Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*.
[249] Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, p. 66.

political gap between plain-folk and wealthy conservatives.[250] Benson agreed, assuring Pepperdine that he would help to improve religious education in the West, as well as using the money to create an environment to better develop Christian character in the students at Harding.[251] After all, Pepperdine's educational ethos resembled his own, and was one that he applied to Harding. True to his word, Pepperdine gifted the $25,000 to Benson and cemented a relationship that would benefit both Harding College and the newly established Pepperdine College in California.

Realising that he could obtain sizeable donations from likeminded individuals, Benson followed up on Armstrong's earlier idea to Davidson. Businessmen were to be invited to speak at Harding to raise the profile of the college. The first distinguished speaker arrived in 1937 and was Dr E. W. Kemmerer of Princeton University, a leading authority on monetary and economic problems. His lecture, 'Inflation and Higher Education' was attended by many of Arkansas' business leaders, as well as educators from several colleges and universities.[252] In the opening speech, Benson outlined the aims for this new lecture programme arguing that 'there should be a closer relationship between business and education.'[253] Again, he wished to appeal to big businesses with his own brand of Americanism to further the college's agenda. Following the success of Kemmerer's lecturer, Benson was able to secure future speakers such as Sterling Morton, Director of the Morton Salt Co. and Director of the Chamber of Commerce; James L. Kraft, President of

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[250] Ibid, pp. 66-67.
[251] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 20.
[252] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 130.
[253] 'Speech of Welcome for Kemmerer Lecture', 1937, box B-063, folder: Speeches, 1937, Benson Papers.

the Kraft-Phenix Cheese Co.; Raymond H. Folger, President of Montgomery Ward & Company; and Dr James K. Hunt, Research Director of the highly influential DuPont Co.[254] The attendance of such prominent businessmen certainly attracted attention for Harding. Furthermore, it raised the reputation of Benson from an unknown president of a small Christian college in Searcy to an influential evangelical whose ideology did not go unnoticed by corporate conservatives outside of Arkansas. Soon, Benson was inundated with invitations from the presidents of companies such as New York Central Railroad, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, the Chemical Bank and Trust Company, and Eastman Kodak. As Stevens put it, 'their doors were open to him.'[255]

As he travelled outside the state to raise money, Benson seized every opportunity to speak publicly. In doing so, he translated his evangelical zeal and missionary fervour into a new campaign. He believed that he had a message for Americans, explaining how he 'wanted them to understand the fundamentals that had guided our country from its earliest days and had led the country from a very modest beginning to the recognised place among the leader of the nations.'[256] Naturally, his speeches contained the three pillars that constituted his own ideology: God, Constitutional government, and the free enterprise system. In preparation for his speeches, Benson collected a wide variety of materials concerning politics and the economy. Examples from the Benson Papers at Brackett Library are predominantly dated from the

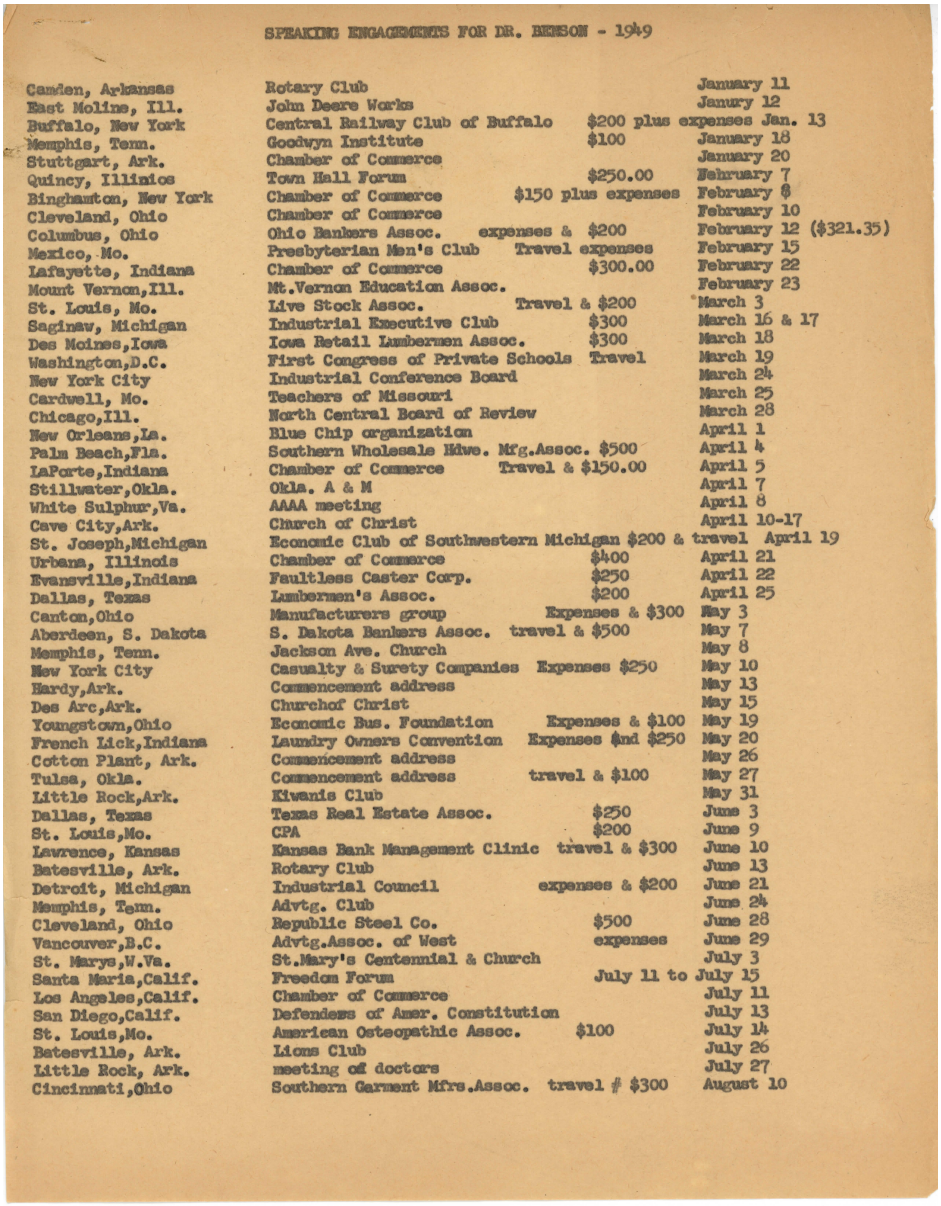
[254] 'The Flame that Must Not Die', pamphlet, undated, box B-037, folder: American Studies Institute, Benson Papers, p. 4.
[255] Stevens, *Before Any Were* Willing, p. 136.
[256] 'The Beginning of the National Education Program', undated, box B-042, folder: The Beginning of the National Education Program, Benson Papers, pp. 2 – 3.

1950s onwards, however, they still provide an insight into Benson's preparations. The materials include publications such as, *Vital Speeches of the Day* and *NAM News*, as well as the Communist Party newspaper, *Daily Worker*.[257] He was also interested in understanding the objectives of Communism in order to use them as fuel for his attacks. As well as educating the public on the fundamentals of Americanism, Benson also made it his 'mission' to 'help acquaint the American people with the realities of Communism which they seemed not to yet understand.'[258] As such, the Benson Papers also contain a wealth of Communist literature.

Benson's determination to preach his own brand of Americanism during his travels eventually caught the attention of big business. His fortunes were also aided by the level of his preparedness. When he spoke, Benson's intelligence, passion, and resolve were clear. He appeared as a self-made and well-educated American which appealed to the leaders of big business, particularly those who had also worked hard for their position. Consequently, Benson found that he 'kept getting more and more invitations to speak and finally was speaking to large groups.'[259] His audiences soon included organisations and industries such as the US Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Iron and Steel Institute, and the National Bankers' Association. Additionally, Benson also received invitations from civic clubs, schools, and churches. His success, he believed, was due to his being 'the only person in the country really coming out with a persistent

[257] Materials for speeches, undated, box B-086, Benson Papers.
[258] 'The Beginning of the National Education Program,' p. 2.
[259] Ibid, pp. 3 -4.

voice for private enterprise and for big business.'[260] Whether or not this was this case, Benson was certainly in high demand for public speaking by the late 1940s.



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS FOR DR. BENSON - 1949

Camden, Arkansas	Rotary Club		January 11
East Moline, Ill.	John Deere Works		Janury 12
Buffalo, New York	Central Railway Club of Buffalo	$200 plus expenses	Jan. 13
Memphis, Tenn.	Goodwyn Institute	$100	January 18
Stuttgart, Ark.	Chamber of Commerce		January 20
Quincy, Illinios	Town Hall Forum	$250.00	Febraury 7
Binghamton, New York	Chamber of Commerce	$150 plus expenses	February 8
Cleveland, Ohio	Chamber of Commerce		February 10
Columbus, Ohio	Ohio Bankers Assoc.	expenses & $200	February 12 ($321.35)
Mexico, Mo.	Presbyterian Men's Club	Travel expenses	February 15
Lafayette, Indiana	Chamber of Commerce	$300.00	February 22
Mount Vernon,Ill.	Mt.Vernon Education Assoc.		February 23
St. Louis, Mo.	Live Stock Assoc.	Travel & $200	March 3
Saginaw, Michigan	Industrial Executive Club	$300	March 16 & 17
Des Moines,Iowa	Iowa Retail Lumbermen Assoc.	$300	March 18
Washington,D.C.	First Congress of Private Schools	Travel	March 19
New York City	Industrial Conference Board		March 24
Cardwell, Mo.	Teachers of Missouri		March 25
Chicago,Ill.	North Central Board of Review		March 28
New Orleans,La.	Blue Chip organization		April 1
Palm Beach,Fla.	Southern Wholesale Hdwe. Mfg.Assoc.	$500	April 4
LaPorte,Indiana	Chamber of Commerce	Travel & $150.00	April 5
Stillwater,Okla.	Okla. A & M		April 7
White Sulphur,Va.	AAAA meeting		April 8
Cave City,Ark.	Church of Christ		April 10-17
St. Joseph,Michigan	Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan	$200 & travel	April 19
Urbana, Illinois	Chamber of Commerce	$400	April 21
Evansville,Indiana	Faultless Caster Corp.	$250	April 22
Dallas, Texas	Lumbermen's Assoc.	$200	April 25
Canton,Ohio	Manufacturers group	Expenses & $300	May 3
Aberdeen, S. Dakota	S. Dakota Bankers Assoc.	travel & $500	May 7
Memphis, Tenn.	Jackson Ave. Church		May 8
New York City	Casualty & Surety Companies	Expenses $250	May 10
Hardy,Ark.	Commencement address		May 13
Des Arc,Ark.	Churchof Christ		May 15
Youngstown,Ohio	Economic Bus. Foundation	Expenses & $100	May 19
French Lick,Indiana	Laundry Owners Convention	Expenses and $250	May 20
Cotton Plant, Ark.	Commencement address		May 26
Tulsa, Okla.	Commencement address	travel & $100	May 27
Little Rock,Ark.	Kiwanis Club		May 31
Dallas, Texas	Texas Real Estate Assoc.	$250	June 3
St. Louis,Mo.	CPA	$200	June 9
Lawrence, Kansas	Kansas Bank Management Clinic	travel & $300	June 10
Batesville, Ark.	Rotary Club		June 13
Detroit, Michigan	Industrial Council	expenses & $200	June 21
Memphis, Tenn.	Advtg. Club		June 24
Cleveland, Ohio	Republic Steel Co.	$500	June 28
Vancouver,B.C.	Advtg.Assoc. of West	expenses	June 29
St. Marys,W.Va.	St.Mary's Centennial & Church		July 3
Santa Maria,Calif.	Freedom Forum	July 11 to	July 15
Los Angeles,Calif.	Chamber of Commerce		July 11
San Diego,Calif.	Defenders of Amer. Constitution		July 13
St. Louis,Mo.	American Osteopathic Assoc.	$100	July 14
Batesville, Ark.	Lions Club		July 26
Little Rock, Ark.	meeting of doctors		July 27
Cincinnati,Ohio	Southern Garment Mfrs.Assoc.	travel # $300	August 10

Benson's speaking engagements for the first half of 1949.[261]

Of course, Benson was not the only evangelical working alongside big business during the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1930s, corporate

[260] Benson's notes for Harding's Oral History Project, p. 10.
[261] 'Speaking Engagements for Dr Benson – 1949', box B-063, folder: 1940s Speaking Engagements, Benson Papers.

conservatives enlisted right-wing Christians to improve their image and disseminate their ideology, just as Sloan had acquired the help of Bruce Barton a decade earlier. Notable figures included the highly controversial fundamentalist J. Frank Norris, Presbyterian and businessman J. Howard Pew, and the anti-Semitic Gerald L. K. Smith, all of whom argued the New Deal would lead to the formulation of a Communist state.[262] Religious organisations also joined the fight and benefited from corporate donations, including the Christian American Association and the Church League of America.[263] These individuals and their organisations were vital to groups such as the American Liberty League and the NAM after their early propaganda efforts were easily dismissed as matters of self-interest rather than a concern for the nation. During a speech to the US Chamber of Commerce in 1938, NAM President H. W. Prentis argued that, 'We must give attention to those things more cherished than material wealth and physical security. We must give more attention to intellectual leadership and a strengthening of the spiritual concept that underlies our American way of life.'[264] For this to work, business needed men of God. In *One Nation Under God*, Kevin Kruse explains that these men could give voice to the same conservative complaints as business leaders, but

[262] For J. Frank Norris see, Barry Hankins, *Gods Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996). For J. Howard Pew see, Brian Farmer, *American Conservatism: History, Theory, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), and for Gerald L. K. Smith see, David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[263] Grem, *The Blessings of Business*, pp. 28 – 29. The Christian American Association also had ties with the American Liberty League with its leader, Vance Muse, becoming nationally famous by distrusting photographs of African American ROTC officers escorting Eleanor Roosevelt during a public event. Both the CAA and the CLA associated the New Deal with Communism.
[264] Ibid.

without the suspicion that they were motivated by self-interest.[265] To continue the example of the NAM, the organisation recruited Reverend James W. Fifield Jr to argue that Roosevelt and his New Dealers were violating the Ten Commandments by making a 'false idol' of the federal government, causing Americans to worship it over the Almighty.[266] His rhetoric was similar to that of other evangelicals working for, or being financially supported by, big business.[267]

Amongst a growing crowd of pro-business evangelicals, there was one particular event that raised Benson's popularity and allowed him to stand above others as a leading advocate of the free enterprise system. On 15 May 1941, Benson attracted national attention when he testified before the House Ways and Means Committee regarding a pending tax measure that sought to subsidise the government's increased defence spending. A national debate was in progress over the scope of federal spending and taxation, as well as the costs of the possibility of joining the war in Europe. In early April, assistant secretary of the treasury, John L. Sullivan reported to Congress that at the end of the fiscal year (30 June 1940), the government had spent $3.5 billion more than the tax revenue collected. By the end of June 1941, he estimated the

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[265] Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, p. 7.

[266] Ibid.

[267] With shared political views (most notably on the importance of the free enterprise system and limited government intervention in the economy), the actions of pro-business evangelicals can be situated within the wider historiography of American conservatism for this era. For notable works, see Gordon Lloyd and David Davenport, *The New Deal and Modern American Conservatism: A Defining Rivalry* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2014), Leo Ribuffo, 'Conservatism and American Politics,' *Journal of the Historical Society* 3:2 (2003), pp. 163 – 75, Michael Kazin, 'The Grass-Roots Right: New Histories of U.S. Conservatism in the Twentieth Century,' *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 136 – 55, and James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933–1939* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1967).

deficit would rise to $6 billion. To make matters worse, the proposed budget for 1942 was projected to be 45 percent more than that of 1941, totalling $19 billion. Defence spending alone totalled $13.7 billion in 1941, with an additional $7 billion in lend lease aid to Britain.[268] To resolve this issue, Roosevelt pushed to increase taxes rather than reduce nondefense spending. However, he was met with resistance from the House Ways and Means Committee. On 28 April, the committee began hearing testimonies in the hope of identifying budget cuts that would appeal to the public. By 15 May, 146 witnesses had been called to testify. Benson, introduced by Arkansas Rep. Wilbur Mills, was witness 147.

Similar to his speeches to big businesses, Benson's opening remarks warned of a country in crisis. The very foundations of America's heritage were under attack from the threat of Communism. He addressed the committee, stating

> The people of the United States are headed directly towards three steps which occur in the following order. Inflation, Socialism, and the worst type of Dictatorship. Unless the proper initial steps are taken by your committee and the Finance Committee of the United States Senate, it is my sincere belief that the people of this country will witness these events . . . Individual initiative, private ownership, the stirring of ambition through financial incentive, all of these and many other of our cherished ideals will no longer exist.[269]

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[268] John L. Sullivan, assistant secretary of the treasury, in US Congress, *Congressional* Record, 77th Cong., first session, June 30, 1941, 87, pt. 1:481 in Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 32. Also see, James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom, 1940 – 1945* (Boston: Harcourt, 1970), W. Elliot Brownlee (ed.), *Funding the Modern American State, 1941 – 1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Wyn Derbyshire, *Dark Realities: America's Great Depression* (London: Spiramus Press, 2013).

[269] Benson's speech before the House Ways and Means Committee, 15 May 1941, box B-063, folder: Dr Benson's Speech Before The House Ways and Means Committee, Benson Papers.

His solution to the problem was the very opposite of Roosevelt's proposed idea. Rather than raise taxes, the US needed to reduce its nondefense spending. Again, his all-important experiences in China surfaced to support his arguments, as he continued:

> I managed a school in Canton, China, for several years – raised and expended all the Income – and there I learned the value of a tenth of a cent – so gentlemen when I say that I have had considerable experience in pruning unnecessary expenses, please do not think that I am boasting or that I am a theorist.[270]

Benson aimed to prove his worth to the committee by speaking of his own experiences in reducing costs. He proposed to the committee a series of cost cutting measure that would save approximately $2 billion. Here, his disdain for the New Deal was evident as many of its programs became targets. By eliminating the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, and federal aid to roads, Benson estimated that the government could save over $1 billion. Additionally, another $1.325 billion could be saved from cutting the Works Progress Administration budget by half. According to Davidson, who was present during this speech, Benson received a standing ovation after finishing his testimony.[271]

Although his plans were not brought to fruition, Benson's ideas had reached the ears of the masses. His greatest publicity came from the *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, where editor Phil S. Hana printed Benson's speech in its entirety. In his opening remarks, Hana pointed towards a statement from an observer within the committee, which read

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[270] Ibid.
[271] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 37.

> An amazing thing happened in the tax bill hearings today – something which never happened before. An unknown witness appeared from a small town in Arkansas to request the reduction of $2,000,000,000 in the budget. Immediately after completing his prepared report, the chairman (Mr Doughton, ranking Democrat) said he would have the address included in the Congressional Record, that he would read it several times himself and that he would urge every member of Congress to read it.[272]

Hana himself urged his readers to do the same, arguing that 'You just know in these days that a man who can arouse a congressional committee to cheer his testimony has said something worthwhile.'[273] Reprints of the speech from the *Journal of Commerce* reached 300,000. Additionally, Benson recalled that various industries and individual groups and organisations had also reprinted his speech, making a total of two million copies (though these were only the ones he was aware of).[274] Although his previous speaking engagements in front of big business groups had created a modest reputation for Benson, they could not compare to the impact that resulted from his success in front of the House Ways and Means Committee.[275]

Following this success, Benson received invitations to speak at widely publicised national events. For the creation of the *Fun and Facts* series, the most important of these occurred in December 1941 when Benson addressed the National Tax Foundation. Approximately 750 people from twenty-eight states witnessed Benson receive a silver medal from the president of the foundation, and head of the Johns-Manville Corporation, Louis H. Brown, for

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[272] Phil S. Hana, 'The Round Table', *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, May 19 and 20 (1941), p. 1.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 29.
[275] Benson's appearance before the committee reached national papers, including the *New York Times*: Henry Dorris, 'Doughton Denies Tax Shenanigans,' *New York Times* 16 May 1941, p. 39.

his efforts in advocating the free enterprise system. When Brown presented the medal to Benson, he spoke of his famous speech before the House Ways and Means Committee, commenting 'A number of you present know well that committees of Congress are difficult to impress. But George S. Benson went before the Congressional Ways and Means Committee last May and made the most remarkable impression in recent years, with a plain common-sense appeal. This common-sense appeal for economy found immediate nationwide recognition.'[276] This nationwide recognition would follow Benson into the Second World War and reach new heights, yet again, during the postwar period with the help of one of his audience members, Alfred P. Sloan. Benson's particular brand of Americanism resonated with Sloan, who introduced himself to Benson at the event. Unbeknownst to Benson, this meeting would result in a postwar business contract with the Sloan Foundation that would make Harding College a leader in Christian and economic education.

Benson's two largest engagements of 1941 – his speeches before the House Ways and Means Committee and the National Tax Foundation – were held in the midst of an ongoing debate regarding America's entry into the war. His presence at the National Tax Foundation, in particular, occurred the day

[276] Anonymous, 'Silver Medal to Dr Benson for Economic Efforts,' *Searcy Daily Citizen*, 6 December 1941, p. 1. This notion of 'common-sense' referred to by Brown is a hallmark of evangelicalism. It is often applied to interpretations of the Bible but can be used in a wider sense, for example with Benson's view of the economy. As Marsden argues, 'in modern America common sense is infused with popular conceptions of straightforward empirical representations of what is really 'out there.'' Things are thought best described exactly the way they appear. This way Benson's approach to his defence of the economy. For more on evangelical common-sense, see George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 165 and Mark A. Noll, 'Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought,' *American Quarterly* 37 (1985), pp. 216 – 238.

before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. However, Benson's emphasis on 'non-defence' expenditure did not signify his stance on the issue of interventionism as his assaults were never accompanied by any engagement with this heavily disputed question. They were, first and foremost, both anti-New Deal and pro-business. Increasing corporate and personal taxes, he believed, was counterproductive as it undermined two essential aspects of a successful economy: the incentive to earn money and the availability of investment capital. The alternative, he argued, was 'inflation, socialism, and dictatorship.'[277]

Benson's reluctance to engage with the interventionist debate was not derived from a lack of conviction, but from his ambition and pragmatism. The Churches of Christ was divided on the matter, despite its longstanding position as a pacifist denomination. On the eve of WWI, the Churches of Christ had the sixth largest number of 'conscientious objectors' of all religious traditions in the United States.[278] This began to shift, however, during the intervening years of the Second World War when a commitment to pacifism weakened significantly. An increasing number of members embraced the need to support the nation's democratic system and private enterprise from foreign influence, despite reservations of 'aiding' Communist Russia. Others were more reluctant, particularly faculty members at Harding where many remained stridently anti-interventionist. It was perhaps in Benson's best interest to

[277] Quote from Benson cited in, Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation,' p. 17.
[278] Loretta Hunnicutt, 'Staying 'On the Beam': Pepperdine College During World War II,' in *Denominational Higher Education During World War II*, ed. John J. Laukaitis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 9. Also, see Thomas H. Olbricht, 'The Peace Heritage of the Churches of Christ,' in *The Fragmentation of the Church and Its Unity in Peacemaking*, ed. Jeffrey Gros and John D. Rempel (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 196 – 219.

remain publicly neutral in this debate to avoid confrontation with opposing factions within his denomination and at Harding. It was a similar situation with the business community, whose support Benson heavily relied upon. Opinions diverged depending on the nature of business, its size, location, and interest in foreign trade and munitions manufacturing. Without the existence of a common ground, it was safer for Benson to refrain from entering the debate. Consequently, information is scarce regarding his views on interventionism. As always, Benson acted pragmatically in securing ongoing donations to support his endeavours in Christian and economic education.[279]

The motivation behind Benson's fundraising campaigns with corporate conservatives is a contested issue. Hicks argues that whether Benson's actions were 'sincere efforts to promote Americanism or merely ploys to reap the financial rewards from conservative businessmen cannot be determined from the available evidence.'[280] However, Benson's own words show that both of these areas were of great importance to his wider objective. As he later recalled, 'My chief concern . . . throughout all of these years has been in Christian education . . . I have considered it worthy of my total dedication.'[281] From his early days as a Bible teacher for his local Methodist church, to his missionary work in China, and ultimately until the final days before his passing, Benson campaigned tirelessly for the sake of Christian education, and both

[279] For historiography on the interventionist debate regarding America's entry into the war, see Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's Fight Over World War II, 1939 – 1941* (New York: Random House, 2013), Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939 – 1941* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000), and Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940 – 1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953).
[280] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 69.
[281] Benson's notes, undated, pp. 4 – 5.

his ideology and the financial rewards from big business were essential. In regard to his ideology, Benson's fundamentals of Americanism were tightly intertwined:

> the people of this country must maintain a free America . . . where all men are free to think, free to work, free to spend their money as they please, free to engage in business at their own risk, free to own property, free to vote their convictions, and free to worship God in their own way.[282]

To maintain a 'free America', the country required the freedom of private enterprise, as well the freedom to worship God, in order to build good character. These two areas were at the core of Harding's principles as he set out to protect the next generation, and the nation, from what he saw as the threat of an encroaching atheist dictatorship.

Furthermore, the donations Benson received were vital in saving the college from bankruptcy. The Depression had a significant effect on the nation's educational institutions with an estimated 20,000 public school closures by 1934. The South was hit particularly hard as serious financial strains meant children spent less time in classrooms with an average school year of six months. Christian schools and colleges were also affected with those, including Cordell Christian College, Oklahoma, and Ozark Wesleyan College, Missouri, closing due to financial pressure.[283] The economic context of America's educational institutes during the Depression makes Benson's

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[282] Anonymous, 'Arkansas Crusader,' *Saturday Evening Post*, 3 June 1944, p. 19.
[283] For the effects of the Depression on America's education system, see Hamilton Cravens and Peter C. Mancall (eds.), *Great Depression: People and Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (eds.), *Education and the Great Depression: Lesson From a Global History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), and William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The Great Depression in America: A Cultural Encyclopaedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007). For the closure of Christian colleges associated with the Churches of Christ, see Foster, Dunnavant, Blowers, and Williams (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.

achievements still more impressive. His ideology, and the passion and professionalism behind it, resonated with the leaders of industry during a time of a financial crisis. As such, Benson was able to achieve two objectives by working with corporate conservatives; to disseminate his ideology to the nation and to raise enough money to clear the debts of Harding. The campaign's rate of success was remarkable. It raised $92,000 in three years.[284] On Thanksgiving, 1939, Benson declared that the college was free of its principle debt, the interest, and the expense of his campaign.[285] Of course, his fundraising efforts did not end here and the donations continued to pour in far into the postwar period.

A Leader in Christian Education

Benson's dedication to Christian education was evident through his use of the donations following the clearance of Harding's debt. In 1936, Benson created the National Education Program (NEP) which, after much financial backing, became the college's flagship organisation. From its humble beginnings to its domination of postwar Christian and economic education, the NEP's purpose was

> to bring about a better public understanding of the American Way of Life. Only an informed and dedicated citizenry active in the public affairs of their communities, their states, and their nation, can assure the continuation of the American system and the individual freedom and great economic opportunity it provides for all.[286]

[284] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 132.
[285] Ibid.
[286] 'The Origin and Purpose of the National Education Program, pamphlet, undated, box B-042, folder: The Beginning of the National Education Program, Benson Papers.

The NEP's beginnings can be traced back to Benson's early speaking engagements. He used the money he received for his public speeches to produce the weekly radio program, *Behind the News*, as well as the weekly newspaper column, *Looking Ahead*. Although it is difficult to determine the popularity of the two, the Benson Papers provide numerous publications from both projects. Many of these documents reiterate Benson's standard rhetoric on the foundations of his own brand of Americanism, however, rather interestingly, they also contain arguments from guests on the benefits of government intervention. An example of this is an undated *Behind the News* broadcast on 'The Efficiency of private Management vs. Government Management of Industry.' Here, Benson's guest, Hershel Dyer of Lubbock, Texas, disagreed with his host, arguing that 'the war has already demonstrated the superiority of government management of industry.'[287] Naturally, Benson disagreed, although the varied ideology on the show demonstrates either his acknowledgement of a fair debate, or another chance to argue directly against opposing views (or both). Of course, it was the latter that inspired big business to continue donating funds that went straight into the pocket Harding College.

More importantly, the NEP led to advances in Christian education outside of Arkansas. Upon hearing of the success of Harding, members of the Churches of Christ in Oklahoma began discussing the possibility of building a Christian college in their state. For guidance, they turned to Benson. Although the opening of a college in Oklahoma would represent competition for Harding,

[287] 'Efficiency of Private Management VS. Government Management of Industry, pamphlet, undated, box B-056, folder: 'Behind the News' pamphlets, Benson Papers.

Benson used the best of his experience to make the institution a reality. He firmly believed in the need for Christian education everywhere and did not worry about 'competition.'[288] Under his guidance as chancellor, Oklahoma Christian University flourished during the 1950s. Benson continued to combine his passion for education with the promotion of the free enterprise system to produce a learning environment fuelled by postwar consumption and entertainment. American Citizenship Training was held alongside Enterprise Square USA, a theme park of free-market capitalism. Through this unusual technique, Christian students were found to be more reliably in favour of free enterprise than their secular peers. It was yet another success story for Benson and his desire to promote religious teachings together with the free enterprise system.[289]

Furthermore, through the NEP, Benson fulfilled his promise to George Pepperdine and the newly established Pepperdine University. As with Oklahoma Christian University, Benson travelled to California to provide counsel to an old friend. During the 1930s and 40s, the university prospered, having gained full accreditation by the Northwest Association of Colleges in April 1938. However, by the mid-1950s, Pepperdine University was suffering from a financial crisis. Pepperdine himself could not raise the funds needed to erase the debts, and the Churches of Christ were not in a strong enough position to provide support. As such, its president, Norvel Young, contacted

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[288] Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing*, p. 173.

[289] Benson's efforts at Oklahoma Christian University are documented in, Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* pp. 67 – 69, Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 68 – 69, and Jan Eskridge, 'Selling Free Enterprise in a Theme Park Atmosphere,' *Oklahoma Business* 9:7 (1979). Also, see 'Gallup Triggers Search for Effective Economics Education Method,' *NB-ES* 1:1 (1980).

Benson in 1957 for assistance. Benson, not wanting to witness the failure of a Christian college, offered his support by choosing Pepperdine University as the next venue for the NEP's Freedom Forum in 1959 – an organisation that resembled Harding's early Distinguished Speaker Series. Arkansas Senator John McClellan was chosen as the keynote speaker for the Freedom Forum; an event labelled as 'a seminar to prepare leadership for American resistance to the spread of Socialism and Communism.'[290] It was, after all, Benson's organisation and so it contained his standard rhetoric on faith in God, Constitutional government, and the free enterprise system. According to Stevens, Pepperdine University maintained its annual budgets every year, without incurring any debt, following the Freedom Forum; providing yet another example of Benson's dedication to Christian education.[291]

By exploring Benson's pre-war activities, the path towards the *Fun and Facts* series becomes clear. His passion for Christian education, alongside his firm belief in the free enterprise system, shaped Benson into a valuable advocate of right-wing causes and ideologies that deeply resonated with the business world. As a result, Benson was presented with a wealth of opportunities to not only propagate his sincere support for private enterprise, but to also raise the funds needed to save Harding College and expand the realm of Christian education. These two seemingly different spaces actually overlapped and became the defining feature of Benson's activities. His ideology produced an influx of donations that were invested back into the college to support further economic programs. With the continuing increase

[290] Pamphlet for Pepperdine College's Freedom Forum, pamphlet, undated, box B-047, folder: Freedom Forum List of Attendees I – XIX, Benson Papers.
[291] Stevens, *Before Any Were* Willing, p. 182.

of these donations, as well as Benson's climbing popularity, his venture into educational films in the postwar period is unsurprising. By capitalising on the success of previous NEP programs, it was only natural for Benson to exploit the popular medium of film during a period of great prosperity and anti-Communist sentiments for the sake of Christian education. He was, after all, a man of God.

Chapter Three

A New Era For The Non-Theatrical Film: Producing an Economic Cartoon Series in Postwar America

On 27 September 1946, George Benson signed a contract with John Sutherland Productions, marking the beginning of production of the *Fun and Facts* series. The timing could not have been better. During the Second World War, attitudes towards propaganda and the use of film to disseminate ideas took a positive turn. As Kirsten Ostherr emphasises, the social conditions instigated by the war 'created a mass, civic-minded audience willing to view regularly the thousands of instructional films that were produced in the postwar period.'[292] Film propaganda achieved a newfound respectability in the US as a medium that facilitated the victory of the allies – both as a training tool for soldiers and for morale boosting on the home front. Additionally, technological advances in the making of 16mm film equipment made productions more accessible to small venues such as schools, workplaces, and community centres. The disgruntled anti-New Dealers of the 1930s capitalised on these conditions during this new golden age of nontheatrical films. As Elizabeth Fones-Wolf argues, there was 'a systematic campaign launched by American

[292] Kirsten Ostherr, 'Health Films, Cold War, and the Production of Patriotic Audiences,' in *Useful Cinema*, eds. Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 114 – 115. For further works on the use of film during the Second World War and the Cold War see, Rick Prelinger, *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006), Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible (eds.), *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2012), Paul Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 1990), Charles F. Hoban Jr, *Movies That Teach* (New York: Dryden Press, 1946), and Robert L. McLaughlin and Sally E. Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema during World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

business in the late thirties but pursued with even great vigour after the Second World War to shape the ideas and images that constituted America's political culture.'[293] Sloan and Benson's project was a notable part of this postwar campaign.

The efforts of the business community benefitted from the revival of American conservatism and the return of a consumer culture that rivalled that of the 1920s.[294] The prosperity of the Second World War brought an end to the Depression and, in the eyes of many conservatives, rendered the New Deal meaningless. In the words of historian Godfrey Hodgson, 'Dr Win-the-War had succeeded where Dr New Deal had failed.'[295] In this changing political climate, with unprecedented prosperity and a re-emergence of anti-Communism, the fortunes of the business community greatly improved. It is necessary to examine these contextual issues as the backdrop to the *Fun and Facts* series to understand why the long 1950s was the ideal time for its conception. The consensus and conflicts behind the production process will

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[293] Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 1.
[294] The postwar period was characterised by the revival of American conservatism, a growing consumer culture , and a rise of fervent anti-Communism. There is a wealth of historiography in these areas. For conservatism, see Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time For Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean, *Debating the American Conservative Movement, 1945 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009). For consumerism, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003) and Stanley Lebergott, *Pursuing Happiness: American Consumers in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For anti-Communism, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) and Richard M. Fried, *A Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[295] Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up*, p. 47.

also be explored to determine the success of continuing corporate-evangelical alliances, as well as the project as a whole. As the rise of the motion picture brought credibility to conservative propaganda campaigns during a time of political, economic, and social change, Sloan and Benson were set to accomplish their aim of spreading free enterprise ideology to the post-war American public.

Propaganda and The Second World War

Before turning to the postwar period, it is important to examine the context of the Second World War to understand how the necessary climate for *Fun and Facts* came to fruition. The Second World War marked the end of the Great Depression and sparked the major revival of American business. It was a time of unity, when, as historian Michael C. C. Adams explains, the nation came alive 'like a giant awakening from its sleep', following the 'treacherous' attack on Pearl Harbour.[296] The war years have become romanticised as America's golden age, a peak in the life of society and one of the greatest eras of prosperity in human history.[297] For business, the emergence of a unified front, alongside an upward trajectory in the economy, presented new opportunities. According to Kim Phillips-Fein, the war transformed the attitudes of businessmen towards Keynesian economics and the New Deal by giving them a chance to reposition themselves as the leaders

[296] Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 69.
[297] William L. O'Neil, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945 – 60* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

of the nation.[298] Accounts of how this occurred tend to stress two overlapping explanations emphasising either patriotic duty or political and economic calculation.

The first of these categories highlights the patriotic contributions of American businessmen and their companies to the war effort. Mark R. Wilson argues that there are large elements of truth behind these accounts given that private companies and large manufacturing corporations, such as General Motors, shouldered the burden of munitions productions by throwing themselves into work with impressive results.[299] GM was the nation's largest defence contractor, delivering an estimated $12.3 billion in material to the war effort.[300] According to William Pelfrey, GM's retired Director of Executive Communications, the company's shift in production has been hailed as 'the greatest industrial transformation in history, with all of the General's 200-plus North American automotive plants shifting to production of airplanes, tanks, machine guns, amphibious transports and other military vehicles within a matter of months.' [301] Furthermore, GM's William Knudsen willingly abandoned his $300,000 salaried position as the company's president to dedicate himself to the war effort from a governmental post. In 1940, President Roosevelt appointed Knudsen as Chairman of the Office of Production Management and as a member of the National Defence Advisory Commission.

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[298] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 31.
[299] Mark R. Wilson, *Destructive Creation: American Business and the Winning of World War II* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 2.
[300] 'Knudsen Led the Switch to a Wartime Economy,' *Automotive News* [http://www.autonews.com/article/20080914/ANA03/809150363/knudsen-led-the-switch--to-a-wartime-economy], accessed 6 November 2017.
[301] William Pelfrey cited in, Ibid.

For one dollar a year, Knudsen's role was to increase America's war time production to meet the needs of the military. When his family questioned his decision to leave GM, Knudsen replied, 'This country has been good to me and I want to pay it back.'[302] Knudsen's dedication to his country is a perfect example of wartime patriotism amongst America's business class.

However, the motivation of many in big business stretched beyond the realm of patriotism and mirrored the public relations campaigns of the 1930s. Accounts within this second category of economic gain portray a far more critical story of American industry during the Second World War, claiming that corporations exploited the war emergency to, as Mark Wilson puts it, 'regain political power and reap economic gains.'[303] This was certainly the case for GM's Alfred Sloan, showing that not all members of GM's leadership fit into Wilson's description of the automobile giant. When Knudsen informed Sloan of his decision to accept Roosevelt's offer, Sloan argued that 'They'll make a monkey out of you down there in Washington.'[304] He then went on to warn Knudsen that if he intended to work for Roosevelt, he need not come back – his days at GM would be through. Evidently, Sloan's hostility towards the President had not changed since the onset of the New Deal.

Continuing disdain of Roosevelt had also shaped Sloan's attitudes towards the war. Initially, Sloan watched the coming of the war with dread, believing that war mobilisation would give the Roosevelt administration greater power to control the economy; New Dealers would have the legal authority to

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[302] William Knudsen cited in, Albert J. Baime, *The Arsenal of Democracy: FDR, Detroit, and an Epic Quest to Arm an America at War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2014), p. 73.
[303] Wilson, *Destructive Creation*, p. 3.
[304] Alfred Sloan cited in, Baime, *The Arsenal of Democracy*, pp. 72 – 73.

rob GM of personnel, profit, and managerial authority. He feared that federal wartime mandates, even if victory was achieved, could leave GM ill-prepared for the return to its core business of making and selling cars to the general public.

However, as the US prepared to enter the war, Sloan shifted his position. As David Farber explains, Sloan came to understand that the war would benefit GM in particular, and the free enterprise system in general.[305] As victory would depend largely on which nation performed best in the industrial realm, politicians were, once again, dependent on men like Sloan and their manufacturing expertise.

With GM concentrating on wartime production, Sloan charged himself with preparing the company for the war's end. He created and chaired GM's Post-War Planning Committee and studied all aspects of the company's wartime conversion to plan for the reversion process. More importantly, especially in regards to GM's post-war reputation, Sloan threw himself into the company's public relations campaigns. Although the industrial PR campaigns of the 1930s were largely unsuccessful, the business world recognised that the key to their post-war success lay in the realm of advertising and public relations. As Walter Weir, copy director of the advertising agency Lord & Thomas, described it:

> this is a war on the psychosocial front as well as the physical front, and the prime mover of public psychology in this country is advertising. And if ever advertising had an opportunity to prove its worth, if ever advertising had a

[305] David Farber, *Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 220.

> chance to silence its critics, this is it. And if advertising muffs this chance, it will never get another one.[306]

Bruce Barton, America's famous advertising executive and an old colleague of Sloan's, whole-heartedly agreed. In 1942, as the president of the Advertising Federation of America, Barton announced:

> The President [Roosevelt] has asked for a name for the war. So far as we in the industry are concerned, the name that we hold in our minds, whether we speak it out loud or not, should be the War that Business Helped to Win . . . If American business rises to its full opportunity in this crisis, makes the right kind of record and unfolds that record, in simple language, to the common man, we need have no fear of the verdict. That common man and his wife, and their boy home from the wars, will register that verdict at the ballot box.[307]

In this 'War that Business Helped to Win,' advertisers would sell victory to the American people in the defence of the free enterprise system and consumer culture. As historian Chares McGovern argues, the assumption was that with a sufficiently vigorous advertising campaign to a public weary of wartime sacrifice, business would reap the reputational and financial benefits of its contributions to the war effort.[308]

At GM, the task of developing a successful PR campaign fell to Paul Garrett, the head of the public relations policy group. His first priority, as he explained to members of the board, was 'interpreting to the public what General Motors is doing in the war in ways that will build a strong public position in the future.'[309] Consequently, the company released a wave of advertisements that showcased its accomplishments whilst pushing a political

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[306] Walter Weir cited in, Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890 – 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 337.
[307] Bruce Barton cited in, ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Sloan cited in, Farber, *Sloan Rules*, p. 235.

message. For example, the 1942 industrial production, *Victory is Our Business*, followed this plan. Essentially, *Victory is Our Business* described the wartime conditions of a GM factory in Dayton, Ohio, and advertised the products produced for the war effort.[310] The audience saw these products in action, emphasising the role of industry in frontline warfare. The core message here was simple: 'Men and women in the plants of General Motors are arming America.' Without these men and women, and without the manufacturing power behind them, victory was unattainable.[311]

In ad after ad, GM proudly gave detailed accounts of its productive capabilities. 'Victory is our Business' became the company's new slogan and a celebration of the free enterprise system lay at the heart of its advertising campaign. A 1942 GM advertisement in the *Indianapolis Star* shed more light on how the business viewed its contributions to the nation:

> "KNOW-HOW" SAVES MANPOWER, MATERIALS AND MONEY – AND GETS THE JOB DONE! Fortunately for all of us, American Industry has this 'Know-How.'
>
> They said that America was unprepared for war and could not arm in time. But they overlooked our "secret weapon" – industrial "know-how." They forgot that in America free enterprise had for years been encouraging – stimulating – urging men to learn how to make things better and better – in greater volume – at constantly lower prices. Now that the needs of peace have given way to the demands of war – now that 'Victory is our business' – our training in this mass production is making itself felt.[312]

[310] 'Victory is Our Business,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGwimOch8U8], accessed 6 November 2017.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Anonymous, 'General Motors: "Victory is Our Business,"' *The Indianapolis Star*, 28 December 1942, p. 13.

Evidently, GM threw itself into an advertising campaign that, once again, placed the free enterprise system at its core. Furthermore, this particular advertisement emphasised the importance of free enterprise prior to the outbreak of war, arguing that the US would not have been prepared without it. Such PR campaigns demonstrated the corporate drive to label the Second World War as the 'War that Business Helped to Win.'

It is not easy to determine the success of wartime industrial films, whether in terms of changing public opinion toward the business community, or simply alerting Americans to its role in the war. What is certain, however, is that the wider film industry enjoyed a boom in production due to its involvement in governmental propaganda campaigns. To maintain a united front against the enemy and uphold morale during what was to become a long and brutal war, Washington recognised the need for an organised information effort to gain the attention and support of the public. Soon after Pearl Harbour, FDR endorsed the motion picture as 'one of our most effective media in informing and entertaining our citizens,' declaring it could be 'a very useful contribution to the war effort.'[313] In 1942, the President established the Office of War Information (OWI) to monitor the American film industry throughout the conflict. However, the OWI rarely became directly involved in the production of commercial motion pictures and was often relegated to an advisory role. It had six aims for the industry to consider when making films related to the war:

1. The Issues: Why we fight. What kind of peace will follow victory.
2. The Enemy: Whom we fight. The nature of our adversary.

[313] Franklin Delano Roosevelt cited in, Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 218.

3. The United Nations and Peoples: With whom we are allied in fighting. Our brothers-in-arms.
4. Work and Production: How each of us can fight. The war at home.
5. The Home Front: What we must do. What we must give up to win the fight.
6. The Fighting Forces: The job of the fighting man on the Front.[314]

Though these were only guidelines, the film industry responded by producing a great number of propaganda films that covered all six aims. The public then viewed these films on a regular basis.

The production of war films was enabled by the so-called golden age of Hollywood which had survived the economic downturn of the 1930s and continued to flourish into 1940s. By 1941, the US was already a nation of moviegoers with approximately 90 million Americans visiting the cinema each week to view the 400 to 500 films Hollywood was releasing each year.[315] With propaganda pieces often shown before each feature, the culture of the cinema provided them with an almost guaranteed audience. As one moviegoer reminisced,

> People of my generation lived, breathed, and ate movies. We would see our favourites ten, twelve, fifteen times or more. We would rush to our neighbourhood theatres twice a week, whenever the program changed. We saw the A feature and the B feature; cartoons, news, shorts . . . All for ten cents and later twenty-five cents.[316]

With such enthusiasm for movies, FDR was right to predict its useful contribution to the war effort.

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[314] U.S. Office of War Information and the Bureau of Motion Pictures, *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, 1942), p. 2.
[315] McLaughlin and Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies*, p. 7.
[316] Anonymous Commentator cited in, ibid, pp. 7 – 8.

The types of film produced for the war can be placed into two overarching categories: films produced for the military and propaganda pieces for the home front. The 1940 Draft Act, combined with the attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, aided in the production of such films. Specialists from the Hollywood community enthusiastically joined the war effort. The numbers of volunteers is impressive, amounting to 1,500 members of the Screen Actors Guild, 48 executives and producers, 132 members of the Screen Directors Guild, 230 members of the Screen Writers Guild, 40 cameramen, 75 electricians and sound technicians, 453 films technicians, and 80 machinists.[317] By the end of the war, their efforts culminated in the production of more than 9,000 military training films alone. The number of non-military films is also staggering, though the exact number is harder to pinpoint.[318]

Geoff Alexander argues that military training films stressed not only *how* to fight, but the *desire* to fight.[319] This mirrored the view of Charles F. Hoban Jr, the Special Assistant of the Division of Visual Education. In his 1946 publication, *Movies that Teach,* Hoban argued that in order for its men to be brought to a mental state where they were willing to make sacrifices, the Army needed to produce a series of films that showed 'the nobility of the *cause* in which they were engaged.'[320] For this, the military enlisted the services of film

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[317] Geoff Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), p. 18.
[318] Hollywood alone produced more the 1,000 feature-length films on the topic. This does not include shorter propaganda pieces shown in cinemas before the main feature, adding thousands to this figure. See, Michael S. Shull and David Edward Wilt, *Hollywood War Films, 1937-1935: An Exhaustive Filmography of American Feature-Length Motion Pictures Relating to World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1996).
[319] Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom*, p. 18.
[320] Hoban Jr, *Movies That Teach*, p. 22.

director Frank Capra. As Thomas Bohn explains, Capra was tasked with 'maintaining morale and instilling loyalty and discipline into the civilian Army being assembled to make war on professional enemies.'[321] To achieve this, soldiers needed to understand why they were fighting. The result was a seven-part series on the causes of the Second World War, aptly titled *Why We Fight* (1942 – 1945).[322] It covered a selection of important events from the rise of the Axis powers in *Prelude to War,* to the invasion of Norway and the conquest of France in *Divide and Conquer* and ending with America's entry into the war in *War Comes to America*. The cumulative attendance by military personnel topped 45 million by 1945, making it the most widely viewed documentary series of its time.[323] It is a fine example of how nontheatrical films were used to train and inspire; to encourage patriotic feelings and provide a reason to fight.

Nontheatrical titles produced for the home front also had to encourage a will to fight and most commonly featured themes associated with points two, four, and five of the OWI's *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*. Points four and five (Work Production: How each of us can fight and The Home Front: What we must do) were regularly combined, as

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[321] 'Why We Fight by Thomas W. Bohn,' *Library of Congress* [https://www.loc.gov/programs/static/national-film-preservation-board/documents/why_we_fight.pdf], accessed 10 November 2017.
[322] The entire *Why We Fight* series can be viewed on the Internet Archive at [https://archive.org]. For notable works on the series see, Ian Scott, 'Why We Fight and Projections of America: Frank Capra, Robert Riskin, and the Making of World War II Propaganda' in *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), pp. 242 – 258 and Matthew C. Gunter, *The Capra Touch: A Study of the Director's Hollywood Classics and War Documentaries, 1934 – 1945* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012).
[323] Robert Niemi, *History in the Media: Film and Television* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 72.

work and production on the home front was essential to the war effort. Often when Americans contemplated the war, there was a tendency to magnify the nation's industrial might.[324] For many, the war effort represented unity. When men willingly went off to fight, those that remained stepped up to fill their places. Women were the new factory workers and Rosie the Riveter became the symbol of the nation's can-do attitude. It was a 'splendid community effort in the best war ever', writes Michael Adams.[325] Although in reality the situation was far more complex, this idea was born during the war itself. In stressing the importance of industry to the war effort, propaganda films emphasised the high standards of American workers whilst displaying the unity of its workforce. An interesting example of these themes in action appeared in the 1943 sponsored production *All Out for* Victory.[326] The film shows a number of scenarios opening with a mother adding 'a little extra care and a little extra hurry up' to her factory work, whilst a picture of her enlisted son sat next to her. After all, the work she is doing is for his sake, to help him win the war. The audience is then introduced to male workers transferring their agricultural skills to the production of tyres and tank tracks. Again, viewers saw examples of workers contributing to the war effort for their sons abroad. In this case, it was a father with four sons whose jobs require the products he is making. Such scenes tried to connect to the emotional aspects of war to emphasise the importance of wartime production to the overall conflict and increase productivity.

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[324] Adams, *The Best War Ever*, p. 69.
[325] Ibid.
[326] 'All Out for Victory,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/AllOutfo1943], accessed 10 November 2016.

It is also worth noting that American propaganda films were not restricted to the confines of the United States. As Allied forces liberated Western Europe, they were accompanied by an ambitious propaganda campaign. Leading the campaign was the OWI's Overseas Motion Picture Bureau with the Academy Award-winning Hollywood screenwriter, Robert Riskin, at the helm of the project. Riskin was a distinguished professional and a close partner to Capra, having written many of his greatest films (*It Happened One Night* (1934) and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936)). Between 1942 and 1945, he oversaw the *Projections of America* series; a collection of twenty-six short documentary films produced with the mission to introduce America to the world. In discussing the purpose of the series, Riskin asked, 'With what kind of films shall we follow our troops to Berlin? Shall we concentrate on the evils of Nazism or on the virtues of democracy? What is the best way to get to the German people?'[327] As historian Ian Scott argues, Riskin was keen to distance his operation from the propaganda material that Capra and other directors, like John Ford and John Huston, were producing for different agencies relating to the conflict.[328] Instead, Riskin opted for a 'soft sell' approach that rejected typical Hollywood traits. As the project's production chief Philip Dunne explained, this involved 'deliberately deglamourising Hollywood's America of penthouses, swimming pools,

[327] Quote from Robert Riskin cited in, 'The Films,' *Projections of America* [https://projectionsofamerica.com/the-films/], accessed 8 October 2018.
[328] Ian Scott, *In Capra's Shadow: The Life and Career of Screenwriter Robert* Riskin (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p. 169. Scott has covered the work of Robert Riskin and the OWI's Overseas Motion Picture Bureau in a number of other publications, including 'Why We Fight and Projections of America,' in *Why We Fought*, eds. Rollins and O'Connor, pp. 242 – 258 and 'From Toscanini to Tennessee: Robert Riskin, the OWI and the Construction of American Propaganda in World War II,' *Journal of American Studies* 40:2 (2006), pp. 347 – 346.

gangsters, straight-shooting cowboys, and under-clad bathing beauties to show the country as it really was. "We're in truth very much like you," we said to the rest of the world. "In fact, we basically *are* you."'[329]

With the work of a talented team of Hollywood filmmakers, *Projections of America* presented stories of ordinary Americans. A cast of cowboys and oilmen, farmers and window washers, and immigrants and school children, sought to capture the essence of American democracy. The films did much more than advertise the goodwill of the nation, however, crossing cultural boundaries at both national and international levels. *Swedes in America* stressed the enormous contributions of Swedish immigrants to industrial and cultural growth, whilst *Cowboy* touched on the collaborative aspects of the war effort in showing how beef was transported to soldiers fighting overseas.[330] The series espoused international cooperation, as well as a racially and ethnically integrated America. This form of propaganda proved successful in a number of countries across Europe. In 1944, the *New York Times* announced that 'American motion pictures have staged a triumphal comeback on Roman theatre screens' and reported that films used 'to instill democratic principles are being shown to enthusiastic throngs.'[331] Additionally, the *Hollywood Reporter* spoke of a 'film invasion of Europe' in a 1944 article detailing Riskin's achievements.[332] The series proved to be widely popular across Western Europe and although it was not shown to US audiences,

[329] Quote from Philip Dunne, cited in: 'The Films', *Projections of America*.
[330] *Swedes in America* can be viewed online. See, 'Swedes in America,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK6T4aaJoto], accessed 8 October 2018.
[331] Tomas Pryor, 'By Way of Report: Italian People Welcome American Films and Ask About the Stars,' *New York Times*, 13 August 1944, p. 3.
[332] The *Hollywood Reporter* quoted in, Scott, *In Capra's Shadow*, p. 181.

Americans were reminded of the powerful influence of the nonfiction genre through the nation's press. The success of *Projections of America* was further evidence of how film could be used as a persuasive tool in which to reach the masses, even more so after the impact of American propaganda on foreign audiences had been discovered.

Assessing the effects of war films, Kirsten Ostherr believes they had a significant impact on both military personnel and the general public. She argues that 'While film propaganda acquired negative connotations through its use in Nazi Germany, it simultaneously achieved a newfound respectability as a medium that facilitated the victory of the Allies, both as a training tool for soldiers and as a vehicle for news gathering and morale boosting on the home front.'[333] This, in turn, gave non-theatrical films credible influence in the postwar era. War propaganda had created 'a mass, civic-minded audience willing to view regularly the thousands of instructional films that were produced in the postwar period.'[334] The 1948 publication 'Let's Make a Movie' by the Visual Information Section of the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), offers a valuable postwar perspective on the state of nontheatrical films. The pamphlet states that:

> World War II demonstrated to the general public the ability of the motion picture to sell, train, inspire, teach and convince in the most effective manner. Eleven- odd million veterans, now returned to peacetime pursuits have great respect for the motion picture. They want to see more films used in business and they expect their children to have the advantage of educational films in school.[335]

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[333] Ostherr, 'Health Films, Cold War, and the Production of Patriotic Audiences,' p. 115.
[334] Ibid, pp. 114 – 115.
[335] Excerpt from the USDA pamphlet 'Let's Make a Movie,' cited in, Ibid, p. 107.

Researcher Kenneth Kaye agreed with the USDA, observing that fifteen million

> men returned home after the war with a keen sense of what instructional films could do – and some of them had also been trained in their use. Many of these veterans became teachers. Others were active parents, school administrators, state legislators, even Congressmen. They did not need to be convinced that films were a good way to learn . . . As these men grew to hold positions of responsibility in American education, the audio-visual movement gradually acquired permanence and acceptability everywhere.[336]

Evidently, both veterans and the general public viewed the motion picture as a tool that assisted in the war effort and believed it would continue to benefit the nation in the postwar era.

The increase in the purchasing of film equipment following the war also supports these claims. In *Sixty Years of 16mm Film*, Paul A. Wagner boasts of the impressive statistics, claiming:

> In 1941 Detroit had only 16 projectors in its high schools; in 1946 it purchased 300. Before the war the total number of general-interest films came to only 500; in the first seven years after the war over 25,000 were produced. The list of 16mm film producers contains more than 600 names. Fifteen years ago there may have been 10,000 sound projectors in use; today, estimates of the number of 16mm projectors available in communities throughout the country range all the way from 250,000 to 400,000.[337]

The increase in film production and distribution, together with the surge in the sale of projecting equipment is sufficient alone in demonstrating the positive effect of war films on visual education. There was evidently a market for the medium in the postwar period. Therefore, whilst evidence on the effectiveness

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[336] Kenneth Kaye cited in, Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom*, p. 20.
[337] Paul A. Wagner, *Sixty Years of 16mm Film, 1923 – 1983: A Symposium* (Des Plaines, IL: 1954), p. 12. Further notable works on the rise of the nontheatrical film genre during the postwar period are outlined in footnote 1 of this chapter.

of individual propaganda pieces remains scarce, films from the Second World War in general had a significant impact on the future of the nontheatrical motion picture. That new popularity ended the long plateau of the 1930s and transformed visual education into the largest film genre in US history. The post-war period, therefore, provided the perfect conditions for the production of the *Fun and Facts* series.

The Rise of Corporate Conservatives

With the new popularity of film, the business community resumed its fight against the New Deal with vigour. Although corporate reputations improved during the war, there still remained pressing national issues that threatened the position of businessmen and the role of the free enterprise system in the US economy post-1945. As Fones-Wolf describes it, American society had yet to reach a consensus on three important matters: the relationship of the government to the economy; on the 'proper size' of the welfare state; and the scope of union power in the factory.[338] Hence, the two most central actors in this debate, the business community and organised labour, each launched strenuous campaigns in an attempt to shape national politics and influence public opinion. As sociologist Robert Lynd observed in 1946, business, in particular, was willing to 'spend unlimited money' for its cause.[339] He warned of their most 'insidious' tactic, the selling of the free enterprise, on the theory that 'if you control public opinion you have the government in your hand and labour behind the eight ball.'[340]

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[338] Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, p. 32.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Robert Lynd cited in, ibid.

However, the situation for the business community in the immediate aftermath of the war was not overwhelmingly promising. Irving Richter argues that at the end of the war, labour's aggregate numbers suggested real power.[341] Approximately 15 million Americans were members of a union by 1947, with labour organisations boasting a 61 percent national approval rating.[342] Experts at the time believed that the balance had shifted away from management to labour. In a speech to a Princeton University conference in 1946, labour economist Professor Sumner H. Slichter argued that there was a 'revolutionary shift in power from business to labour in the United States . . . a labouristic society is succeeding a capitalist one.'[343] From 1945-6, the US witnessed a display of labour's power when the nation suffered from the largest strike wave in American history. The Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), a pro-New Deal labour group that was responsible for the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, regained its momentum in the postwar period and mobilised workers into action. As Robert H. Zieger describes, 'the war's end brought familiar scenes of mass strike action, frantic and slap-dash efforts at governmental intervention, and jerry-built compromise solution.' [344] According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS), the 4,985 work stoppages arising out of the labour-management controversies in 1946 exceeded the

[341] Irving Richter, *Labour's Struggles, 1945 – 1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 1.
[342] For statistics on union membership see, United States Department of Labour & Bureau of Labour Statistics, 'Directory of Labour Unions in the United States,' *Monthly Labour Review* (1947), p. 1. The approval rating for labour unions was produced by Gallup, see 'Labour Unions,' *Gallup* [https://news.gallup.com/poll/12751/labor-unions.aspx], accessed 9 July 2018.
[343] Professor Sumner H. Slichter cited in, Richter, *Labour's Struggles*, p. 1.
[344] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935 – 1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 213.

previous year's total of 4,750; it was also slightly higher than the former peak in 1944 when 4,956 stoppages were recorded.[345]

The patriotic ties that had bound the nation together so successfully in achieving phenomenal wartime production records were severed when labour and management faced off and fought over the economic realities of reconversion. The BLS noted that workers grew concerned about losses in earning alongside the rise of prices, whilst employers worried about government controls, reconversion problems, and new markets for their products.[346] Matters were made worse due to the inability of labour and management to resolve their differences without costly work stoppages. With no sign of the strikes slowing down, the future of big business appeared uncertain.

Fortunately for the business community, the changing political climate of the post-war period provided a lifeline for corporate America. According to Godfrey Hodgson, the fortunes of conservative America following the Second World War is a story of revival after the near collapse of the movement during the New Deal years.[347] In 1946, the Republicans recaptured control of both houses of Congress during the midterm elections for the first time since 1930 and proceeded to pass a solid portfolio of anti-New Deal legislation. The most notable piece of legislation passed during this time was the Labour Management Relations Act of 1947, more commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act after its sponsors Senator Robert A. Taft and Representative Fred

[345] United States Department of Labour; Bureau of Labour Statistics, 'Work Stoppages Caused by Labour-Management Disputes in 1946,' *Bulletin No. 918* (1947), p. 1.
[346] Ibid, p. 6.
[347] Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up*, pp. 46 – 47.

A. Hartley Jr.[348] This was a bold effort to weaken the pro-labour Wagner Act of 1935, which was a significant cause of corporate grievance during FDR's New Deal era. In the words of Taft himself, the Act intended to 'restore justice and equality in labour-management relations. It was not new law, but a revision of elaborate and existing laws such as the Wagner Act . . . which were so one sided.'[349] Whilst the Act reserved the rights of labour unions to organize and bargain collectively, it introduced a range of measures that limited union power, including the outlawing of closed shops; a ban on secondary, sympathy, and jurisdictional strikes or boycotts; and an advanced notice of 60 days before the commencement of a strike.[350]

Predictably, the Taft-Hartley Act produced an array of responses from those on both sides of the argument. The conservative business community, with the help of the NAM, threw its full strength behind the bill with an intense lobbying campaign alongside expanded PR activities to garner public support. According to Fones-Wolf, the NAM alone spent $3 million in a propaganda effort that included full page advertisements in 287 daily newspapers from 193 key industrial centres.[351] In 1950, Harry Millis and Emily Brown argued that the NAM used 'typical propaganda methods of appealing slogans, half-truths,

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[348] For more information on the Taft-Hartley Act, see Michael Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republic Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For a broader context, see also Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up*, James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945 – 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013).
[349] 'Senator Robert Taft – 1947 Taft-Hartley Speech,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJZvlCRxYHI], accessed 13 November 2017.
[350] 'Some Aspects of the Labour Management Relations Act, 1947,' *Harvard Law Review* 61:1 (1947).
[351] Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, p. 43.

misrepresentation, as well as failure to disclose real motives.'[352] Its efforts were aided by a compliant right-wing press, such as the *Quincy Record* of Illinois which printed the bi-weekly talks of Henry J. Taylor, a GM -sponsored radio commentator. Capitalising on public fears of radicalism as the Cold War heated up, Taylor labelled the opponents of the Act as 'Communist fellow-travellers' who weakened America by 'sponsoring false economic doctrines.'[353] Once the battle had been won, the NAM and its supporters positioned themselves on the high-ground and reached out to labour, calling for a 'good-will' approach.[354] This was undoubtedly a tactic to rally the support of workers in the aftermath of the Act by presenting management as having their best interests in mind.

In analysing the opposition from the left, Samuel Rosenberg claims that the viewpoints of organised labour did not receive the same exposure as those of the business community. Unions did not have the financial resources to purchase extensive newspaper advertising, nor did their efforts contain the level of sophistication as those from big business.[355] Regardless, the concerns of labour were heard. In an article in *Time* magazine, labour leaders branded the Taft-Hartley Act as the 'slave labour bill.'[356] This notion was adopted almost immediately and became the focus of cartoons and cover art in Communist party literature.

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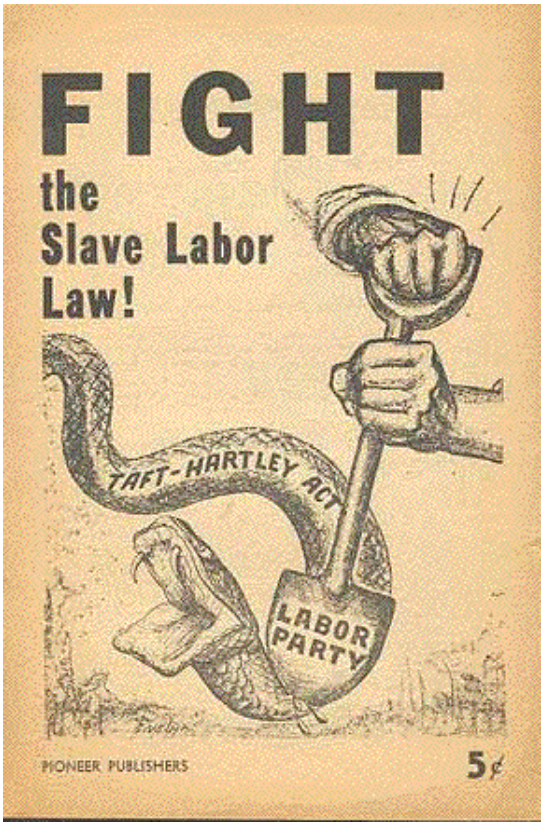
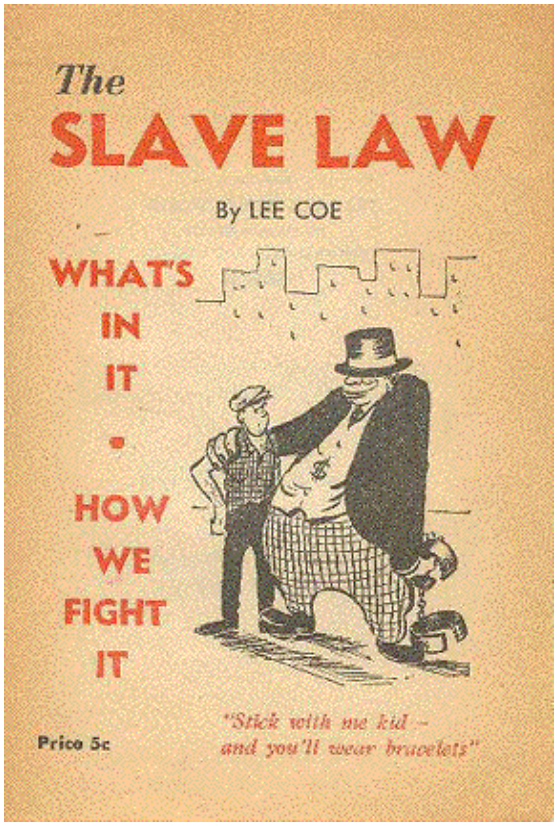
[352] Harry A. Millis and Emily Clark Brown, *From the Wagner Act to Taft-Hartley: A Study of National Labour Policy and Labour Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), pp. 290 – 291.
[353] Henry J. Taylor cited in, Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, p. 49.
[354] 'NAM Asks Industry to Help Labour Law Work Smoothly,' *New York Times*, 24 June 1947.
[355] Samuel Rosenberg, *American Economic Development Since 1945: Growth Decline and Rejuvenation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 71.
[356] Anonymous, 'National Affairs: Barrel No. 2.' *Time*, 23 June 1947, p. 19.





On the left: Pioneer Publishers, the publishing arm of the Socialist Workers Party, printed this pamphlet in July 1947. On the right: The West Coast newspaper of the Communist Party (U.S.A.), *Daily People's World*, published this pamphlet in 1948.[357]

Meanwhile, the CIO accused the sponsors of the Act of attempting to commit the 'Perfect Crime' whilst plotting to destroy labour unions. CIO president, Phillip Murray, claimed the law constituted an 'unprecedented challenge' to American workers and called upon organised labour to pledge that it would do 'everything within our means to wipe the infamous Taft-Hartley Act from the statute books.'[358] Their fight was supported by President Truman who attempted to veto the bill and by many local politicians such as the mayor of

[357] The source of these images, and others, can be found at: 'Pamphlets in the Fight Against Taft-Hartley, 1947 – 1948,' *Labour Studies and Radical History* [http://hll.org/tafthartley.html], accessed 14 November 2017.
[358] Phillip Murray quoted in, Clayton Knowless, 'Labour Day Pleas Ask Law's Repeal', *New York Times*, 1 September 1947, p. 1.

New York City, William O'Dwyer.[359] Despite its lack of funds, the support for labour, alongside its own propaganda campaign, indicated that the Left still possessed a powerful voice that potentially threatened the authority of management and the power of big business after the Second World War. Nevertheless, the political and legislative arms of the CIO proved inadequate in expanding the welfare state and preventing anti-labour legislation in the era of a Republican Congress.[360]

The passing of the Taft-Hartley Act was a success for the business community. After a disastrous interwar period, the efforts of corporate propaganda were finally contributing to the rehabilitation of American business. This encouraged a continuation of PR campaigns in defence of the free enterprise system against the perceived threats of certain 'isms'; most notably Communism. On 9 October 1947, NAM president Earl Bunting declared war on 'economic gold-brickers,' claiming that he and the organisation's 16,500 members were ready to give 'the fight of their lives to the travelling salesmen of the isms hawking their wares at the factory gates, the schoolhouse doors and every crossroad of civilisation.'[361] Consequently, the *New York Times* announced a 17.98 per cent rise in automotive advertisements in all New York newspapers from November 1946 to November 1947.[362] Later in December, the NAM announced that it would spend a further $900,000 to expand its PR

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[359] President Truman attempted to veto the bill in an attempt to improve his reputation amongst labour leaders after the strike waves of 1945-46. His veto can be found at 'Veto of the Taft-Hartley Labour Bill,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12675], accessed 15 November 2017. Mayor William O'Dwyer's attack of the bill can be found in, Anonymous, 'Mayor Denounces Taft-Hartley Bill,' *New York Times*, 4 June 1947, p. 1.
[360] Zieger, *The CIO*, p. 212.
[361] Anonymous, 'NAM Set to Fight Alien 'Isms' Here,' *New York Times*, 9 October 1947, p. 22.
[362] Anonymous, 'NAM Ads to Continue,' *New York Times*, 5 December 1947, p. 45.

campaigns throughout 1948. Its long-term program of presenting the business man's 'point of view' was to continue, alongside developing themes that included 'the size and significance of corporation profits and expositions on the free enterprise system.'[363]

The defence of the free enterprise system was not just restricted to the realm of corporate relations. This was very evident in the continuing cooperation between business and religion as well. Whilst the public fight between management and labour was heating up around the Taft-Hartley Act, Sloan and Benson were conducting their own battle against the forces they felt threatened their economic freedoms. During the war, Benson – like the business community – equated military victory with the triumph of Americanism. Following Allied victory in 1945, however, Benson returned to his pre-war concerns regarding the threat of Communism. This was not a difficult transition given the nation's growing preoccupation with the Cold War.[364] Amid the witch hunts of McCarthyism, aggressive anti-Communist propaganda campaigns, and the defence of the American way of life, Benson and his fellow fundamentalists initiated their own attacks against the 'red menace.' High profile figures such as Billy James Hargis and Carl McIntire echoed Benson's anti-Communist rhetoric, arguing that the Godless ideology

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[363] Ibid.

[364] Anti-Communism during the Cold War is a topic richly researched by historians, covering every aspect of the topic: from the policies of President Truman and the Red Scare conducted by Senator McCarthy and HUAC, to the cultural impact of widespread propaganda campaigns. Notable works include, Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, Fried, *A Nightmare in Red*, Philip Jenkins, *The Cold War at Home: The Red Scare in Pennsylvania, 1945 – 1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), John Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace?: American Communism and Anti-Communism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 1995), and Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

of the left was a threat to conservative notions of Americanism.[365] For Benson, the apathetic and war-weary public was easy ideological prey for what he believed to be 'self-deceived liberals.' These liberals were at best unknowingly introducing socialism into the government and, at worst, knowingly betraying the country to a worldwide Communist conspiracy.

As such, Benson developed a new mission for the NEP – to expose Americans to the potential dangers of Communism. This 'Godless' ideology, he believed, stood as the greatest threat to the nation. His ardent anti-Communism characterised the fundamentalist view of un-Americanism and preoccupied his thoughts for much of the postwar period. As was the case with China, Benson sought to save America from the clutches of the left and this time, it was the free enterprise system that was his Gospel and the motion picture his words. Overt themes of anti-Communism were not always central to the *Fun and Facts* series, but the perceived threat from both domestic and international socialism was certainly amongst the main motives behind its production. Not only would the series enlighten the American voter, but it would also reinforce the legitimacy of private property over a feared alternative; mirroring the efforts of the NAM. By combining the positive attributes of the free enterprise system with anti-Communism, the NEP could

[365] Anti-Communist became a defining feature of fundamentalist rhetoric during the Cold War. For example, Billy Graham often argued that Christian salvation was the only vaccine against Communism: 'The greatest and most effective weapon against Communism today is to be born again Christian' (1954), in Thomas Aiello, 'Constructing "Godless Communism": Religion, Politics, and Popular Culture, 1954 – 1960,' *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 4:1 (2005). Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis led the charge against the perceived Communist infiltration of the churches, focusing on the liberal organisations of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches: 'liberalism is socialism and socialism is the first phase of Communism.' Both also broadcasted their views over the radio. For more details, see Richard Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanised Christianity* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

take advantage of the efforts, skills, and monetary support of big business and, in turn, educate their employees with Benson's own brand of Americanism.[366]

Producing the *Fun and Facts* Series

With the continued popularity of the motion picture, the most effective method for confronting the American public during the post-war period was through the use of film. As such, Benson was eager to capitalise on the newfound respectability of the educational short film to disseminate his ideas to a wider audience. His plans to do so materialised before the war had come to an end, echoing the level of preparedness seen within the business community. On 19 March 1945, Benson's close business associate Clinton Davies drafted a memorandum detailing the discussion between the two on the developments of post-war education. Davies noted 'the possibility of securing an instructor from the army who would develop the use of visual aids, cartoons, and other special methods of educating people with low intelligence that have been used so successfully by the army.'[367] Davies had paid attention to the successful use of film as a training method for the armed forces and looked to apply the same techniques in educating the average American worker, who he evidently considered to be of 'low intelligence'. He continued, 'I thought we could train our students in the use of these methods for educating workers in their plants on the fundamental economic principles which

[366] L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), pp. 51 – 52.
[367] Davies to Benson, letter, 19 March 1945, box B-009, folder: general correspondence 1945, Benson Papers.

determine their ability to make a living.'[368] However, Davies believed that promoting these ideas, alongside the development of educational business courses, would be difficult if Harding College was to remain in Searcy, Arkansas. To him, Harding was more likely to succeed in the realm of business if it moved to a prime location in Little Rock.

The location of Harding, however, proved to be somewhat irrelevant. Benson's reputation as a leading defender of the free enterprise system had provided him with a list of influential business contacts that would make his venture into educational films a success. According to Hicks, Benson had consulted with Walt Disney during the war on the possibility of producing an economic cartoon series that advertised his agenda of Americanism. This was not an area of interest to Disney at the time, even though he had his own fight with labour and the left, and so he steered Benson in the direction of his former studio executive, John Sutherland.[369] Sutherland had left his position at Disney in September 1940 and produced training films for the armed forces during the war. In 1945, he opened his own animation company, John Sutherland Productions, and found immediate success producing the *Daffy Ditties* series for United Artists. By the time *Fun and Facts* appeared on the big screen, Sutherland was producing approximately twenty films a year – a

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[368] Ibid.

[369] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 63. Hicks' account of who first made contact with Disney differs from a February 1990 interview with Sutherland conducted by animation historian Michael Barrier. According to Sutherland, the Sloan Foundation sent a representative to Disney, who then steered them in the direction of Sutherland. This account is unreliable as correspondence between Sloan and Benson describes how Sloan intended to speak with Disney during the war but never found the time. Sutherland's account can be found at 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story,' *Hogan's Alley* [http://cartoonician.com/animating-ideas-the-john-sutherland-story/], accessed 16 November 2017.

rate he sustained for the next two decades. His output was so impressive that at one time Disney considered buying Sutherland's studio, but the deal was never made. With so much experience, particularly during and after the war, Sutherland was the perfect producer for the *Fun and Facts* project.[370]

The employment of Sutherland also provided the project with a link, however distant it may have been, to Disney. As one of Sloan and Benson's greatest inspirations throughout the making of the series, Disney's name makes a reoccurring appearance despite his lack of involvement in the making of *Fun and Facts*. On an ideological level, Disney held many of the same views as Sloan and Benson following similar experiences during the Depression era. In February 1941, Disney fell victim to the New Deal when George Bodle, an attorney for the Screen Cartoonist Guild (SCG), filed charges with the National Labour Relations Board accusing the studio of unfair labour practices. After several months of legal and political negotiations between the union and the studio's management, the SCG called for a strike. Starting on 28 May, the strike lasted four months ending on 15 September. According to Steven Watts, the dispute marked a turning point in the studio's history.[371] After a successful decade during the 1930s, an intense atmosphere fell upon the company as a result of continuing labour problems. Disney later announced his belief that the strike involved 'a Communist group trying to take

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[370] There are very few sources that provide biographical details on Sutherland, despite his successful career at Walt Disney Studios and John Sutherland Productions. The two major sources are 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story', *Hogan's Alley* and 'Animated Propaganda During the Cold War: Part Two,' *Animation World Network* [https://www.awn.com/animationworld/animated-propaganda-during-cold-war-part-two]. Examples of Sutherland's work can be found on the Internet Archive at [https://archive.org/search.php?query=john%20sutherland%20productions].

[371] Steven Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 204.

over my artists.'[372] His anti-communist sentiment continued into the Cold War era, saving his company from the clutches of the House Un-American Activity Committee (HUAC). This anti-Communist rhetoric would have appealed to Benson in particular, who would have been eager to employ Disney as the producer of a conservative, economic series such as *Fun and Facts*. The animator also attracted the attention of the project's team with his status as the industry's leading pioneer. Disney's animation was considered among the best in the genre as it developed and utilised high-end techniques that advanced American animation for decades to come.[373] If the *Fun and Facts* project could not recruit Disney himself, and ex-employee was the next best option.

The date on which Benson first made contact with Sutherland is unknown, though a contract was signed between the two men on 27

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[372] Walt Disney, cited in Watts, *The Magic Kingdom*, p. 241. Disney's disdain for the left is well documented; from his response to the 1941 strike at Walt Disney Studio, to his anti-Communist testimony before HUAC in 1947 in which he accused former employees of Communist association. For more information, see Tom Sito, *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Labouring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), Watts, *The Magic Kingdom*. For Disney's HUAC testimony, see 'Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry', *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/stream/hearingsregardin1947aunit/hearingsregardin1947aunit_djvu.txt], accessed 10 July 2018.

[373] Disney's position as a leading animation pioneer is discussed further in chapter four, within an analysis of the style of the *Fun and Facts* series. Although the studio faced immense competition from other established companies such as MGM and Warner Bros. during the 1940s and 50s, Disney's involvement in advancing new technologies that were pertinent to the industry solidified his position as one of the greatest producers of the genre. The content of his cartoons also appealed to Sloan and Benson as the studio's focus was different in its use of humour compared to others. Though it was included, the messages within each feature took centre stage, as was the case with *Fun and* Facts. It was his talent and ideological stance, therefore, that attracted Sloan and Benson to Disney and influenced their approach to the project. There was no personal relationship between the three, despite Sloan and Benson's desire to recruit Disney.

September 1946. Several weeks later, Sutherland made a visit to Harding to explore the activities of the NEP and according to the college newspaper, *Bison*, he greeted Benson's project with great enthusiasm.[374] However, he was keen to reiterate the estimated cost of the series, which he projected to be $50,000 per cartoon. This did not deter Benson, for he had already made contact with Sloan who had agreed to fund the series. Hicks gave this brief account on the beginnings of *Fun and Facts*, though for a leading historian of Benson and the NEP with access to the Benson Papers at Harding, his work provides a limited and misleading interpretation.[375] Discussions between Sloan, Benson, and Sutherland began long before the signing of the contract. On 18 September 1946, Benson wrote to Sutherland with his congratulations on 'the fine job that you have done so far on this production. If the finished product comes through as we now believe it will, in my opinion there is a great road before us for additional films to render a national service.'[376] Additionally, a letter from Sloan to Benson dated 23 September describes how a script for the first cartoon, *Make Mine Freedom*, had already been developed and sent to Benson and the Sloan Foundation.[377] The foundation provided the funds for the series and so all scripts were required to be approved by Sloan and his associates before they were put into production. As Sloan gave Benson and Sutherland the green-light, *Make Mine Freedom* was in the process of being animated before the foundation received the contract in December 1946.

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[374] Anonymous, 'Hollywood Producer of Harding Movie Speaks to Students,' *Bison*, 31 October 1946, p. 2.
[375] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 63.
[376] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 18 September 1946, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[377] Sloan to Benson, letter, 23 September 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

Evidently, all those involved in the making of the film were eager to have a finished product as quickly as possible.

These early correspondences reveal the ambitions of Sloan and Benson regarding educational films. In Benson's letter to Sutherland, it is clear that he was already thinking of the possibility of producing further films, before the first had even entered production. Sloan was also interested in this matter. In his 23 September letter to Benson, Sloan described his interest in developing their ideas further:

> What I would like to inquire – and is much more important than this one film – is: - Do you think, or do the people who have the film, believe that this type of thing offers a pattern for the development of future economic problems, using the same instrumentality? As you of course know, there are all kinds of problems that are generally recognised and accepted by people who are familiar with such matters which are entirely unknown and ignored by politicians and the people at large.[378]

It was the duty of the Sloan Foundation to 'use its resources . . . to tell the simple economic truths to the masses of the people.' He had, of course, attempted to do so through his previous venture into educational films in the 1930s, yet this time, he had allied himself to an educator who was interested in the same objective; to promote the workings of the free enterprise system, rather than to create 'new academic studies involving economic philosophy' and foster academic debate.[379] In an era when the nontheatrical film had proved to be a powerful pedagogical tool, Sloan's optimism about his second venture into economic films was high.

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[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.

From Benson's response, it appears that all parties involved in the production of *Make Mine Freedom* possessed much of the same vision. According to Benson, he had spent two years trying to find a solution to the problem he shared with Sloan. The public did not need new facts, he suggested, but an understanding of 'the old fundamental facts to the degree that they may be publicly supported.'[380] Benson wrote in 1946 that this was when he found Sutherland to be 'very deeply interested in the same matter and willing to give his very best to the development of the proper technique.'[381] Although little is known of Sutherland's background, his son, Eric Sutherland, described his father as being a strong supporter of the free enterprise system.[382] His close relations with Disney supports this claim as Sutherland reminisced, 'Walt complimented me on my work and said he would be glad to recommend me for a job or funding prospective animation or live-action films I would write or produce.'[383] Given Disney's staunch opposition to the left, it is unlikely that he would have upheld his promise if Sutherland's ideology did not suit his own. As such, Sutherland's motives for working on *Fun and Facts* were likely more than just monetary. Under Benson's direction, he found a pattern for the entire series of cartoons in the form of recurring characters. These characters could be carried over into other pictures, just as Donald Duck had appeared in so many of Disney's short subjects. This solution satisfied Sloan's desire to achieve a 'Disney technique' in a series that showcased the important characteristics of the free enterprise system. From

[380] Benson to Sloan, letter, 5 October 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.
[381] Ibid.
[382] 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story,' *Hogan's Alley*.
[383] John Sutherland cited in, Ibid.

an ideological and thematic perspective, the production of *Fun and Facts* was off to a good start.

However, issues began to arise shortly after production on *Make Mine Freedom* commenced. Whilst all parties agreed with the style and content of the cartoons, reinforcing their ideological consensus, priorities soon began to differ around the issue of where the boundary line between education and entertainment should be drawn. The first hiccough arose in 1947 over the title screen for the first cartoon. For the Sloan Foundation, having the name of an educational institution predominantly featured on the title screen posed a significant problem. On 23 June, Arnold Zurcher (the Foundation's executive director) wrote to Sutherland stating:

> It is our opinion that a statement should definitely be made of Harding College's association with the enterprise. At the same time, we also feel that this emphasis on the College, an emphasis which even obscures the title of the film, may prejudice distribution . . . If the name of the College appears too prominently at the very outset of the film, it will immediately label the thing as "educational".[384]

As *Make Mine Freedom* was intended to be an educational picture, Benson strongly disagreed with Zurcher. In his response to Sutherland, Benson argued, 'In my opinion, the fact that it is being produced by a college will give it better standing in the minds of the audience than if they didn't know who was producing it and thought maybe it was just a plain commercial picture.'[385]

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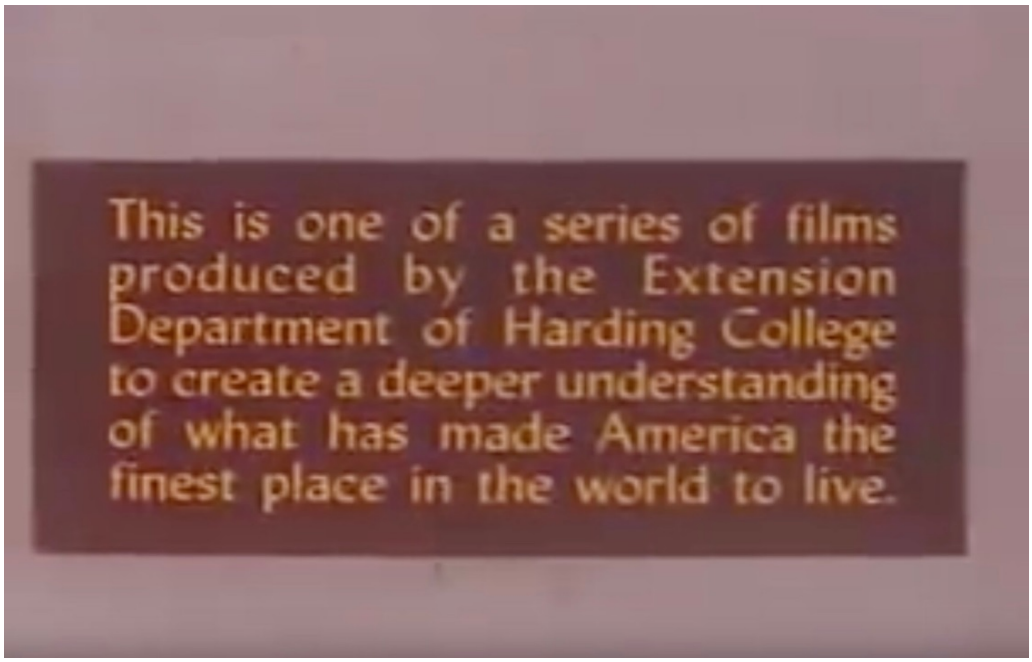
[384] Zurcher to Sutherland, letter, 23 June 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

[385] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 5 July 1947, box B-057 folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers. Benson's argument here relates to the issues of corporate propaganda in educational films prominent during the 1920s and 1930s. Fears of the ideological content of corporate sponsored films, together with primary and secondary sources, are outlined in chapter one. In the immediate postwar era, these fears subsided (with the aid of the Red Scare) only to resurface in the late 1950s; see chapters four and five.

Despite wanting the full address of Harding on the picture (as Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas), Benson claimed that he was not concerned about advertising the title screen provided for the college. Rather, he believed that 'a small college has a fine a reputation for presenting an unbiased study as any organisation in the nation.'[386] Benson, however, lost the battle and the name of Harding College was placed within a block of text on the opening screen. The conversation swiftly moved on with no further objections from Benson showing that the issue did not have a damaging effect on production. Nevertheless, it served as a precursor for later conflicts and problems.



The finalised title screen for *Make Mine Freedom.*[387]

Issues concerning distribution continued to cause friction throughout 1947. By October, *Make Mine Freedom* had been fully animated and was being shown to select audiences chosen by Benson and the Sloan Foundation.

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[386] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 5 July 1947.

[387] 'Make Mine Freedom,' *The Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/MakeMine1948], accessed 10 July 2018.

Sloan's own opinion of the film was extremely high. In a letter to Benson, he claimed 'we have something here that is well worth while and a real contribution toward the objective that we have in mind.'[388] However, whilst their overarching objective of spreading the positive aspects of the free enterprise system remained the same, their motives for doing so appeared to differ. From early discussions regarding distribution, there was a consensus that the film should exploit channels of primary distribution first, before entering the secondary channels.[389] There was an agreement that the film would have the widest impact if shown in the cinemas, where it could reach large audiences. Yet once *Make Mine Freedom* was ready for release, cracks began to show in the partnership between Sloan and Benson. On 11 December, Sloan wrote to Benson arguing:

> There is very definitely a conflict here between the interests of Harding College and the interests of promoting the maximum distribution of this particular picture and others that we hope to follow.
>
> We have in the theatrical audience an estimated coverage of 30-35 million people and I am sure that is something that has got to be recognised as a very valuable possibility in the big objective we have in mind of presenting, in a simplified form, a fundamental economic truth.[390]

Sloan's concern regarding distribution arose from Benson's continuing emphasis on education. In a previous letter to Sloan, Benson argued that 'it is in the interest of the film program itself that it be kept as definitely an integral

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[388] Sloan to Benson, letter, 29 October 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

[389] Primary channels of distribution relate to the release of a film through the cinema. Secondary channels are those exploited after, or instead of, theatrical release and involve the distribution of a film through classrooms, workplaces, civic centres, etc.

[390] Sloan to Benson, letter, 11 December 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

part of the Harding College program as possible.'[391] However, this caused a direct conflict with earlier plans to have the film shown in cinemas; especially since a contract with MGM had already been finalised. A film could not exploit both channels of distribution at the same time, meaning that *Make Mine Freedom* would be tied to MGM for two years. Benson attempted to ease the tension almost immediately, assuring Sloan that their objectives remained the same. On 24 December 1947, he wrote 'I am unable to see any conflict at this point whatsoever. The only objective Harding College had in mind is maximum distribution. If maximum distribution is to be obtained through theatrical distribution, then that is our No. 1 ambition.'[392] Despite this, Benson dedicated the last three paragraphs of his letter to his hope that MGM would release *Make Mine Freedom* for secondary distribution after one year. Evidently, Benson's key interest in Christian education remained strong, as he later reminisced to his successor Dr Ganus.[393] Though he recognised the significance of having the film released in the cinema, Benson's main objective was to have it distributed through schools, workplaces, and spaces of communal gatherings. This was typical of an educator, just as Sloan's desire for nationwide, cinematic success was typical of America's corporate conservatives.

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[391] Ibid.

[392] Benson to Sloan, letter, 24 December 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

[393] Benson's devotion to Christian education was a top priority, as outlined in chapter two. In Benson's own words: 'My chief concern . . . throughout all of these years has been in Christian education . . . I have considered it worthy of my total dedication', found in: Benson's notes, undated, box B-001, folder: Autobiographies, Benson Papers.

Sutherland's response to both issues was one of distant sympathy. In a possible bid to keep the peace, he said he could see both sides of the argument. His position changed, however, when production began on the second film of the series, *Going Places*. In 'Fun and Facts About American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Series', Caroline Jack argues that 'over the course of the Fun and Facts project, Sutherland and the other parties involved in the films' production struggled to craft a highly persuasive media product with wide popular appeal, one that balanced education and political indoctrination against entertainment and humour.'[394] Her conclusion is derived from an issue concerning the balance of education and entertainment within the films that followed *Make Mine Freedom*. Whilst MGM enthusiastically distributed Harding's first film, the company was unimpressed with the script of *Going Places* and refused to showcase it in their theatres. On 9 July 1948, Zurcher expressed his disappointment to Sutherland and discussed their plans moving forward, stating:

> Following Loew's [MGM] decision . . . we held a rather extensive conference in this office on the future of the whole picture program. We all feel that every effort should be made to insure theatrical distribution for the remaining films if that is at all possible. Lowe's have indicated that they have no

[394] Caroline Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series,' *Enterprise & Society* 16:3 (2015), p. 492. Historiography relating to the production of *Fun and Facts* is extremely scarce. The series is certainly an overlooked aspect of American conservatism and corporate-evangelical alliances. Jack's article is one of the few pieces that offers scholarly insight, as does Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* Thomas Honsa, 'Dr. Benson's Cold War Prescription: How a Cartoon Series Presaged America's Cold War Lifestyle,' *Journal of Popular Film and* Television 40:4 (2012), pp. 202 – 211, and Robbie Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation: George S. Benson and Modern American Conservatism' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015). Snippets of information can also be found in 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story', *Hogan's Alley* and 'Animated Propaganda During the Cold War: Part Two', *Animation World Network*.

> objection to exhibiting the films of this type provided there is sufficient entertainment value . . . By entertainment value they mean specifically humour.
>
> To improve prospects . . . the question has been raised whether it would be possible for you to develop some sort of liaison with MGM whereby they might have an opportunity to see the storyboard and sketches before they are 'shot'.[395]

For Sutherland, the suggestion of having another company interfere with his work was insulting. He immediately fired off a response to Zurcher in which he argued that it was difficult to determine in what matter he could work with MGM, writing 'I appreciate Loew's offer of a cooperation to help me determine theatrical release quality or subject matter, but I do not think that the production of the finest cat and mouse cartoons [Tom & Jerry] necessarily means their boys would be of any help creatively or intellectually to our organisation.'[396] He would, however, be happy to show them two cartoons that were created by Disney for propaganda purposes – to provide them with knowledge on how propaganda pieces should work, which would help in their planning decisions.

His discussion with Benson on the matter was much more reserved. It provides a window into Sutherland's primary concern, which was closer to that of Benson than to that of the Sloan Foundation. In his 16 July letter to Benson, Sutherland explained how they had previously discussed the complexities of maintaining a balance between entertainment and education. In this instance Sutherland argued, 'if humour over-balances education in the type of film we are producing the audience is apt to be confused and miss the educational

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[395] Zurcher to Sutherland, letter, 9 July 1948, box B-057 folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.

[396] Sutherland to Zurcher, letter, 16 July 1948, box B-057 folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers. During the 1940s, MGM's animation department was most famous for the production of its flagship cartoon series, Tom & Jerry. See, Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Jeff Lenburg, *Who's Who in Animated Cartoons* (New York; Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2006).

point entirely.' Furthermore, he reiterated that it was his job to 'use my craftsmanship to help you attain your objective as to my knowledge you are the only capable man in the United Sates doing a completely unselfish job in educating the American people in the imperative necessity of maintaining political and economic freedom.'[397] Sutherland's response to this issue shows his desire to produce a film series in which the main objective was to educate, rather than entertain. This was the only time throughout the production process that Sutherland appears to have taken a definite position in support of one or other side of the corporate-evangelical/educational alliance that underwrote *Fun and Facts* – and, in this case, he stood with Benson.

Although managing the relationship with MGM was a significant matter, since it potentially affected the main objective of the series, it was swiftly resolved. Without much further discussions, the Sloan Foundation agreed to release *Going Places* through secondary distribution channels and provided the funds for Harding's third cartoon, *Meet King Joe*. Furthermore, Sutherland remained in charge of producing future scripts and storyboards without interference from MGM, who upheld their contract and released the rest of the *Fun and Facts* series through their cinemas. Even the cartoons which contained very little humour, such as *Albert in Blunderland*, met with little resistance; which was a surprise to Sloan who claimed it was 'supercharged' with propaganda.[398]

Whilst the issue concerning a lack of humour in *Going Places* was a problem with the animation arm of MGM, it is possible that the propagandistic

[397] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 16 July 1948.
[398] Sloan to Benson, letter, 2 December 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.

and patriotic stance of the series as whole resonated with the top echelons of the studio. Louis B. Mayer, the co-founder of MGM, was a staunch Republican who shifted the company evidently to the right throughout his period of management (1924 – 1951). According to Steven J. Ross, Mayer turned MGM into a publicity wing of the GOP and provided a training ground for future conservative activists such as George Murphy, Robert Montgomery, and Robert Taylor.[399] He was also the chairman of California's Republican Party in 1932. Mayer's conservative ideology infiltrated MGM's motion pictures, as did his Puritan values. As Scott Eyman explains, under Mayer's leadership, the studio's productions were 'clean and wholesome.'[400] 'I worship good women, honourable men, and saintly mothers,' Mayer would intone.[401] Both Sloan and Benson publicly shared Mayer's strong adherence to conservative values and support for the Republic Party; positions that were highly visible in the series.

Mayer's conservative influence over MGM culminated in the formation of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPA) in 1944. Together with some of the studio's most right-wing conservatives – directors Sam Wood and Clarence Brown, writer James McGuiness, and set designer Cedric Gibbons – the MPA announced its frustration with the 'growing impression that this industry is made up of, and dominated by,

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[399] 'Five Reasons Hollywood is not a Bastion of Liberalism,' *Washington Post* [https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/political-bookworm/post/five-reasons-hollywood-is-not-a-bastion-of-liberalism/2012/02/24/gIQAoO0RYR_blog.html?utm_term=.101fe38e224a], accessed 10 October 2018.
[400] Scot Eyman, *Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B Mayer* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. 62.
[401] Quote from Louis B. Mayer cited in, Eyman, *Lion of Hollywood*, p. 62.

Communists, radicals and crackpots' and pledged to 'fight Fascist or Communist control or any other non-American control of our unions, our guilds, our personnel, and our products.'[402] Interestingly, the FBI found that 200 of the organisation's initial 225 members worked at MGM.[403] In the immediate postwar era, the MPA urged HUAC to investigate Communist infiltration in the film industry. MGM, confident in its anti-Communist position, released a number of anti-Communist films throughout the latter half of the 1940s, including *Conspirator* and *Red Danube* (both released in 1949).[404] The combination of conservative values and staunch anti-Communism within MGM provided the *Fun and Facts* team with the perfect studio to distribute its cartoons. If its support from MGM's animation department was to dwindle, Sloan and Benson could have easily appealed to the ideological leanings of the studio's management. It is, perhaps, due to its conservative nature that the remainder of the series was accepted by MGM despite confrontations over its entertainment value.

The fact that these three potentially deal-breaking issues were resolved quickly shows that although cracks did appear in Sloan and Benson's partnership, the desire to educate the public in the workings of the free

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[402] Quote from an unknown MPA member cited in, Steven J. Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 120. For further works on the MPA, see Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930 – 1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), Brian Neve, 'HUAC, the Blacklist, and the Decline of Social Cinema,' in *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950 – 1959*, ed. Peter Lev (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 65 – 86, and John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[403] Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, p. 120.
[404] For more on MGM's anti-Communist films, see 'Film Industry: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios (MGM),' *The Wende Museum* [https://www.coldwarculvercity.org/mgm.html], accessed 10 October 2018.

enterprise system was strong enough to keep this partnership together. However, the differing ambitions of Sloan and Benson represented their respective positions within the wider society. On one hand, Sloan, a pioneer of the automobile industry, wished to target the wider public in order to showcase the positive attributes of the free enterprise system to an audience that had the power to shape the reputation – and with it the economic well-being – of big business. Benson, on the other hand, looked to concentrate on particular groups of society, especially students. Advertising the free enterprise system was just one aspect in his larger plans in the development of Christian education. Despite these differences, Sloan and Benson, together with Sutherland, achieved their objective of producing an economic, educational film series that celebrated the free enterprise system.

Chapter Four

Selling Free Enterprise Through Animation

In the spring of 1948, MGM orchestrated the theatrical debut of *Make Mine Freedom*, the first in the *Fun and Facts* series. As a result, more Americans were exposed to Sloan and Benson's ideological efforts than at any other stage in their careers. They released the *Fun and Facts* cartoons one after another to the public through cinemas, workplaces, schools, and community centres. The content of these ten-minute shorts, which have long been neglected by scholars, offered the audience an education in the basic economic facts of the free enterprise system, and instructed viewers in patriotism, consumerism, and anti-Communism in the midst of the Cold War. In analysing these themes, this chapter will move away from the political tensions of the postwar period to focus, instead, on the economic ideology of conservative America as portrayed in the *Fun and Facts* series. Revealingly, the messages conveyed by the series are strikingly similar to other propaganda efforts, particularly those from the corporate world, and so the themes of the cartoons will also be addressed. Through the use of high-end technicolour, Sutherland's productions, argues Amid Amidi, were among the 'most visually satisfying industrial films produced during the 1950s.'[405] As such, *Fun and Facts* offered a distinct interpretation of postwar economics through the use of animation, characterised by praise for the free enterprise system and ardent anti-Communism.

[405] Amid Amidi, *Cartoon Modern: Style and Design in Fifties Animation* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), p. 46.

The production of the *Fun and Facts* cartoons added to a growing multitude of economic propaganda produced during the postwar period. Much of this reminded Americans of their fortunate position in the wake of the Second World War and ultimately called on them to protect it. America's wartime economy ushered in a new age of prosperity, ending the Great Depression and replacing it with unprecedented growth. By 1947, the gross national income had risen to 202,598 million dollars following a steady climb during the war, whilst the gross national product, recorded between 1945 and 1969, increased by a staggering 250 percent.[406] This striking economic upturn was a blessing to the many businessmen, wage earners, white-collar workers, professionals, and farmers who feared and expected a postwar recession or depression. The boom meant that things would mostly go well with regard to demobilisation of the armed forces and shutdowns in defence industries and prevent unemployment, deflation, and bankruptcy.[407]

After the economic fluctuations in the decades following the First World War, these fears were not wholly unjustified, nor did they immediately disappear in the wake of the postwar boom. The postwar years were an uncertain period. The 1946 strike wave posed a risk to production output as two, albeit minor, recessions occurred in 1945 and 1949. There was a swift contraction of government spending, equivalent to an estimated 30 percent of national income between 1945 and early 1946, and inflationary pressure

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[406] Statistics on the gross national income can be found in, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1948* (Washington D.C.: Unknown Publisher, 1946), p. 276, on gross national product see, Ross Gregory, *Cold War America, 1946 to 1990* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2003), p. 69.

[407] In 1943, a group of economists produced a report containing their predictions for America's postwar economy. Alvin H. Hansen's piece claims many feared a postwar collapse. See, Alvin H. Hansen, 'The Postwar Economy,' in *Postwar Economic Problems*, ed. Seymour E. Harris (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1943), p. 12.

followed the termination of wage and price controls.[408] Nevertheless, the feared slump never materialised. Instead, Michael French argues that a 'virtuous cycle' was established through 'the revival of a pattern of high levels of investment, technological change, and productivity growth.'[409] This cycle, alongside a newly skilled workforce (largely due to the GI Bill), underpinned a rise in real incomes between 1945 and 1969. As a result, the majority of Americans prospered within a newfound 'Consumers' Republic' that offered a rise in living standards and increased spending power.[410]

Sloan and Benson did not fear the possibility of a postwar economic downturn. Unlike his counterparts at Ford Motor Company and the Chrysler Corporation, Sloan believed that the nation would witness a boom in the economy which, in turn, would revive the automobile industry and re-establish GM as one of America's top corporations.[411] Benson's predictions were less clear. However, both he and Sloan shared the same faith in the free enterprise system. If a depression were to materialise, Sloan argued that the US 'would still have more than any other people in the world because of the free enterprise system.'[412] Benson agreed, claiming 'Our private enterprise system even [in a depression] gives us more than other countries enjoy . . . even during the thirties which represented America at her worst, we still were living

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[408] Michael French, *US Economic History Since 1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 40.
[409] Ibid.
[410] Lizabeth Cohen uses the term 'Consumers' Republic' to describe America's postwar consumer culture. See, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003).
[411] William Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors: The Story of Two Unique Men, A Legendary Company, and a Remarkable Time in American History* (New York: Amacom, 2006), p. 271.
[412] Sloan to Benson, letter, 28 July 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

better than the masses of the people in any other country of the world at their best.'[413] Fortunately, attempts to convince the public of this proved to be less difficult than it had been in the 1930s and 40s given that morale was high and the economy strong.

Depicting Free Enterprise

To educate the public about this newfound prosperity, Sloan and Benson agreed that they needed to present the basic economic 'truths' relating to the free enterprise system within the *Fun and Facts* series. In the early days of the project, Benson wrote to Sloan and offered his full support, reiterating that it was not new facts the public needed, but an understanding of existing economic philosophy. Consequently, a number of the *Fun and Facts* cartoons were solely related to the workings of the economy in which several aspects were to be explored. The 1948 production, *Going Places*, was the first cartoon centred on the economy in the series (though the second to be released).[414] Originally titled, *The Profit Motive*, *Going Places* focuses on the industrial growth of protagonist Freddy Fudso; a young boy who wanted to spend his childhood having fun but is forced to help make soap to support his mother. When dreaming of how he would rather spend his time, Freddy stumbles across the idea of the profit motive. The cartoon described this as the process of an increased work effort in a bid to maximise profits, giving Freddy more time to pursue his hobbies. The fruits of Freddy's hard work were shown

[413] Benson to Sloan, letter, 4 August 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[414] 'Going Places,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/going_places], accessed 5 January 2018.

immediately. Before long, the audience witness the rise of his business, titled Fudso Soap Co., and the direct influence his efforts had on the community. Here, *Going Places* resembles the NAM's 1940 live action short, *Your Town: A Story of America*, which showcased the positive impact of industry on the development of a small town.[415] As Freddy's business grows, it brings transportation, new companies, and more workers to the community. The property taxes from these businesses feed money back into the local economy providing better schools and roads, as well as governmental services such as a police force. As the narrator proudly announced, 'when business is profitable, it benefits everyone.'

As well as showcasing all the good that businesses did, *Going Places* also touches upon a negative aspect of industrial growth. Once Freddy is an established businessman, he is approached by a competitor who encourages him to join forces and form a monopoly. In doing so, Freddy and his new associate seek to control the market and fix the price of soap at a higher rate to increase profits. Here, *Fun and Facts* introduces a long-standing issue that has been a source of conflict between the government and big business throughout the modern era. In 1890 Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act, or An Act to Protect Trade and Commerce Against Unlawful Restraints and Monopolies. In outlawing practices considered harmful to consumers, the Act stated that

> Every person who shall monopolise, or attempt to monopolise, or combine or conspire with any other person or persons, to monopolise any part of the trade or commerce

[415] A detailed description of *Your Town* can be found in chapter one and viewed on YouTube at *'Your Town: A Story of America,' YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K6YWLCYyz0], accessed 5 January 2018.

> among the several States, or with foreign nations, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour.[416]

This enabled the federal government to curtail the power of business during periods of corporate concentration and inequality.[417] Anti-monopoly sentiments also provided the government with a line of attack against business during the Depression, aided by low public opinion of large corporations. In his 1936 re-nomination acceptance speech, President Roosevelt devoted much of his time to addressing the problem of 'industrial dictatorship.'[418] He claimed that 'throughout the nation, opportunity was limited by monopoly' and that these new 'economic dynasties, thirsting for power, reached out for control over Government itself.' To combat this threat, Roosevelt placed Thurman Arnold at the head of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division. In 1938 Arnold wrote 'An Inquiry into the Monopoly Issue' that employed the propaganda tactics of big business. In connecting the division's work directly with people's lives, Thurman argued that corporate monopolies were 'a tax on the public and a threat to democracy,' illustrating his point with a drawing of a policeman keeping the road to opportunity clear from a stream of workers, farmers, and small businesspeople.[419]

With such intense attacks on monopolies occurring during the Depression era, it is unsurprising that the issue makes an appearance in *Going*

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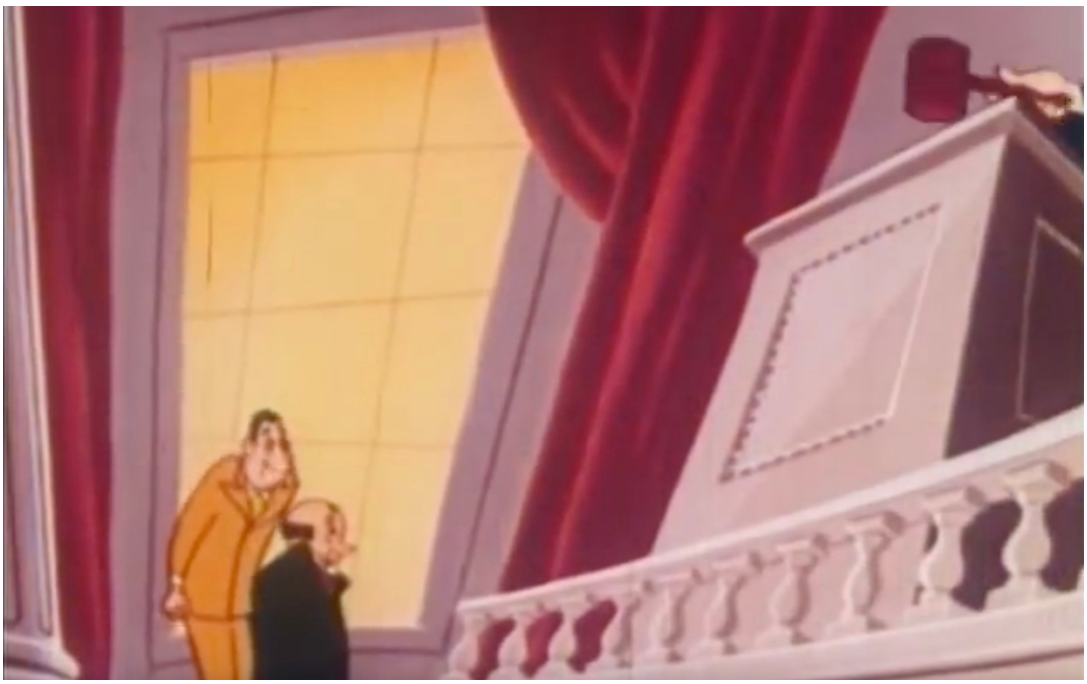
[416] U.S. Congress, *An Act to Protect Trade and Commerce Against Unlawful Restraints and Monopolies*, 51st Congress, 1st session, 2 July 1890, pp. 1 – 2.
[417] Cases against monopolistic behaviour resulted in several high-profile lawsuits during the twentieth century. Notable cases include United States v. Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey (1911), United States v. American Tobacco Company (1911), and United States v. E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. (1956).
[418] 'Franklin D. Roosevelt: Acceptance Speech for the Re-nomination for the Presidency, Philadelphia,' *The American Presidency Project* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15314], accessed 7 January 2018.
[419] Thurman Arnold, 'An Inquiry into the Monopoly Issue,' *New York Times Magazine*, 21 August 1938, p. 3.

Places. *Fun and Facts* attempts to use criticisms of monopolies to its advantage by agreeing with public values on the subject. After Freddy enters a monopoly with a rival company, the fortunes of Fudso Soap Co. rapidly deteriorate. Their attempt to fix prices fails after new competitors enter the market and sell their products at competitive rates. Not only does the company suffer as a result, but Freddy and his associate find themselves at the mercy of the law. The narrator chimes in, explaining that '99 times out of 100, competition works! When it doesn't, government steps in to prevent monopolistic attempts.' Following government intervention, Freddy learns from his mistake and returns to his reputable business practices.

Though this sequence made the final cut, not all parties agreed with it its inclusion. On 29 June 1948, Zurcher wrote to Benson with the results of an early screening of the cartoon. He argued that *Going Places* should show that competition is 'self-regulating and protects against the abuses of monopolies', however, this particular scene claims that 'if competition does not do the job automatically, the government steps in and promotes fair competition.'[420] This was criticised quite heavily for being, as Zurcher argued, 'dramatically weighted in favour of governmental policing', highlighting the anti-governmental stance of the Sloan Foundation in matters concerning the economy.[421] Sutherland disagreed, claiming that only one person criticised the sequence. Furthermore, despite his conservative economic outlook, Sutherland argued that 'free men must make laws to protect their freedom

[420] Zurcher to Benson, letter, 29 June 1948, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[421] Ibid.

from combinations of more powerful free men.'[422] Benson also disagreed with Zurcher. Though he admitted that he had always been a little uneasy about the scene, Benson argued that 'it does picture a condition that actually exists in our country and that I believe the critics would feel [it] ought to be represented.'[423] If it was not included, critics could rightly label *Going Places* as propaganda created to show nothing but the positive aspects of big business, rather than the fundamental facts.



The disputed sequence showing government intervention in preventing monopolies (*Going Places* 1948).[424]

Despite internal disagreements over the need for government intervention, *Going Places* successfully provides a basic explanation of the profit motive to its viewers. In clarifying the objective of the film to Sloan,

[422] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 2 July 1948, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[423] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 6 July 1948, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[424] 'Going Places,' *Internet Archive*.

Sutherland argued that the aim was to 'dramatise the profit motive in a manner which would leave the conclusion in the minds of the audience that the profit motive was a good motive, one which contributes to the welfare and the happiness of all the people in this country.'[425] By emphasising the role of business in the wider community and the benefits it provided to its citizens, *Going Places* met the objectives set out by Sutherland and his production team.

Following the production of *Going Places*, the *Fun and Facts* team began preparations for similar films based on different aspects of the economy. The next purely economic feature to be released was the 1949 cartoon *Why Play Leapfrog?*[426] Featuring one the series' most recognisable characters, the often angry and disgruntled everyman labourer Joe, *Why Play Leapfrog?* explains the relationship between wages and prices. This was a particularly significant area of interest in the postwar period. During the war, wages and prices were controlled by the federal government to prevent high levels of inflation. When the cost of living rose by 11 percent in 1942, the government reduced it to 1.7 percent in 1944 and 2.3 percent in 1945.[427] However, as companies converted to producing consumer goods in a peacetime economy, the business community was eager to scrap price controls whilst workers fought for higher wages. The 1945-46 strike wave was a 'wage offensive,' Jack Metzgar argues, as the vast majority of strikes focused 'purely and simply'

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[425] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 3 November 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[426] 'Why Play Leapfrog?,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/4050_Why_Play_Leap_Frog_01_37_44_23], accessed 20 January 2018.
[427] Jack Metzgar, 'The 1945 – 1946 Strike Wave,' in *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*, eds. Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, and Immanuel Ness (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 218 – 219.

on wage increases.[428] Prices rose by 16 percent, though wages in durable-goods-producing industries increased by only 7 percent.[429] Consequently, the CIO and AFL demanded a rise in wages without an increase on the cost of consumer goods, yet companies insisted this could not be done. For example, GM's Auto Workers union leader Walter Reuther issued a strike demand for a 30-cent wage increase without an increase in car prices. He challenged GM to 'open the books' to prove it could not afford the raise, though the company declined to do so.[430] As Metzgar argues, American unionists thoroughly understood how a pay increase could be eaten away by a rise in the cost of living.[431]

Interestingly, the simultaneous rise in wages and prices was also rejected by some in the business community. After giving a speech to businessmen during the time of the 1945 GM sit-down strike, Benson was dismayed by the lack of understanding on the matter by those in the audience. In a letter to Sloan, dated 5 October 1946, he described how he had made the statement that if wages went up thirty percent, the price of an automobile would increase by the same amount. Upon returning home, Benson received a letter from one of the businessmen arguing that his claim was 'absurd and

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[428] Metzgar, 'The 1945 – 1946 Strike Wave,' p. 216. For further work on the state of the economy, including the issue of wages and prices, in the immediate post war period, see George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labour and culture in the 1940s* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), Geoff Mann, *Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), Thomas A. Stapleford, *The Cost Of Living in America: A Political History of Economic Statistics, 1880 – 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, and Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Truman Administration and its Reconversion Wage Policy,' *Labour History* 6:3 (1965), pp. 214 – 231.
[429] Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, p. 115.
[430] 'GM Rejects Reuther's Call to "Open the Books": The Post-WWII Strike Wave,' *History Matters* [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5138/], accessed 26 January 2018.
[431] Metzgar, 'The 1945 – 1946 Strike Wave,' p. 219.

that no informed person should make such a statement and that anyone should know that labour was only a part of the cost of an automobile.'[432] In response, Benson stressed

> if wages went up thirty percent in the automobile industry they would go up a similar amount in other fields and coal, iron, steel, cloth and everything else that went into an automobile would go up until finally the cost of the automobile would be forced up as much as wages.[433]

Sloan was taken aback by the incident, stating that it was 'extraordinary to me how ill-informed representative businessmen are on these simple things.'[434] As such, Benson and Sloan were eager to educate both businessmen and members of the public in this matter, culminating in the idea for *Why Play Leapfrog?*

To tackle the issue, *Why Play Leapfrog?* explains how the relationship between wages and prices works from an industrial perspective. Protagonist Joe is a dissatisfied labourer in a doll manufacturing plant. In his appearances throughout the series, Joe is always drawn as a stereotypical white working class American wearing overalls. His bright ginger hair, inherited from his grandfather, may reflect a possible Irish ancestry as hinted at later in *Meet King Joe*. This would not be unusual as Benson himself was of Scottish-Irish descent and proud of his working class background. In *Why Play Leapfrog?*, Joe's unhappiness is a result of an increase in the cost of living that is making it difficult for him to make ends meet. Joe's luck appears to change when he is presented with a pay rise, just in time for his daughter's birthday. However,

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[432] Benson to Sloan, letter, 5 October 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Sloan to Benson, letter, 9 October 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

when he hurries to the store to buy his factory's popular product, the Dilly Dolly, he discovers that the price has increased from $1.50 to $2.00. Outraged, Joe cries 'I work in the factory that makes this doll! Two bucks is too much.' When the manager explains that the Dilly Dolly Company charged them extra for the shipment and so they had to raise the price of the product, Joe argues 'We got a wage increase alright, but it couldn't raise the price that much!' He then goes on to list the cost of the doll's raw materials in relation to the retail price before storming out of the store.[435]

From here, the narrator explains the situation to Joe. He acknowledges that Joe is correct in his estimates on the cost of raw materials, but stresses that 'raw materials in practically everything we buy are worth little until labour transforms them into finished products.' In relating to Benson's statement, the narrator uses the example of the automobile industry to explain how the production process influences a product's final cost. Although the raw materials amount to $22, they require the 'accumulated labour of thousands of people in countless crafts to transform them into a finished automobile.'[436]

The following sequence then goes on to describe how the labour and wages in each industry involved in the production process affects the price of the product. Automobile companies must take into account the miners who dig the coal and iron ore, railroad workers who transport the materials to the steel mill, the workers who convert the ore into finished steel, and so on. When the factory receives the materials, the labour and the wages of those who make the car must also be taken into account. To offer the audience accurate

[435] 'Why Play Leapfrog?,' *Internet Archive*.
[436] Ibid.

statistics in this process, and to provide some authenticity to the cartoon, Benson hired a researcher to gather precise information on the making of an automobile which he then sent to Sutherland.[437] In these calculations, the labour costs of an automobile amounted to 80 percent of selling price. The remaining 20 percent covered the cost of raw materials and various industrial profits. As a result, 'a wage raise means a corresponding rise in prices.'

This cycle could be broken, however, if productivity increased proportionately. To achieve this, the narrator claims that labour and management must work together to produce new ideas and to advance technology. Only then could a wage gain amount to a real change, allowing workers to buy more with what they earn. The message that Sloan and Benson were eager to disseminate then, was that workers would benefit from increased productivity through cooperation with management. In the absence of cooperation, wages and prices would continue to play leapfrog. Such propaganda carried great weight during a time of growing labour/management hostilities and following one of the largest strike waves in American history.

Why Play Leapfrog? was not the only cartoon in the *Fun and Facts* series to cover this timely issue. In 1951, Harding released its sixth film, *Fresh Laid Plans*, which focused on the broader topic of government intervention through the fixing of wages and prices, as well as the introduction of farming subsidies.[438] Set in the charming village of Eggsville, the film features a professorial owl who attempts to solve an upcoming economic problem

[437] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 4 June 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[438] '*Fresh Laid Plans,*' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8KzMVsZkU4], accessed 1 February 2018.

amongst the population of chickens. The whole village relies on the production of corn, both as a food source and as the main manufacturing product in the local factory. Consequently, when the farmer's crop fails, the shopkeeper is forced to raise the price of corn which has the potential to disrupt the whole village. The owl then steps in with a 'plan index', claiming to be an expert in regulating the law of supply and demand. By fixing the price of corn and reimbursing the farmer through subsidies collected from taxes, the village remains prosperous and the owl is placed in a government post where he has 'all the powers and stand-by controls needed to plan what was best for everybody.'[439]

The owl explains his plan to fix the shopkeeper's price of corn and provide the farmer with subsidies (*Fresh Laid Plans*, 1951).[440]

However, the system begins to fall apart when the businessman finds it increasingly difficult to meet the tax demands of the government. As a result,

[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid.

the company raises the price of corn which causes a string of events to unfold; the sale of corn decreases; profits decline; workers are laid off; and local businesses suffer. When the owl tightens government control by fixing prices and reducing workers' wages to enable the factory to pay tax, the chickens are forced to buy produce from the black market. After the townsfolk are imprisoned, the local policeman realises he will not be paid and opens the prison gates, allowing a mob to chase the owl out of town.

The use of a professorial owl offering advice on economic policy signifies the *Fun and Facts* team's disdain for the New Deal through a representation of anti-intellectualism. Throughout his presidency, Roosevelt was often ridiculed as a 'Brain Trust ruled Dictator' due to the involvement of intellectuals in the New Deal administration.[441] In 1932, one of Roosevelt's advisors, Samuel Rosenman, urged the would-be President not to rely, unlike his predecessors, on the nation's industrialists, financiers, and political leaders who had 'failed to produce anything constructive to solve the mess we're in today.'[442] Instead, he encouraged Roosevelt to turn to the universities. In doing so, Roosevelt enlisted a group of Colombia Law professors to offer their advice on the continuing financial crisis. Adolf Berle, Raymond Moley, and Rexford Tugwell formed the core of Roosevelt's first brain trust and were

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[441] Richard S. Kirkendall, 'Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual,' *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49:3 (1962), p. 458. The term brain trust was first used by James Kieran in a 1932 article for the *New York Times*. For more on Roosevelt's brain trust, see Elliot A. Rosen, 'Roosevelt and the Brains Trust: An Historiographical Overview,' *Political Science Quarterly* 87:4 (1972), pp. 531 – 557, Aaron Lecklider, *Inventing the Egghead: The Battle over Brainpower in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Random House, 1962), and Barry D. Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[442] Quote from Samuel Rosenman cited in, Kirkendall, 'Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual,' p. 459.

instrumental in shaping the policies of the Frist New Deal, including the regulation of bank and stock activity, large scale relief, and public works programs. According to Aaron Lecklider, the brain trusters quickly became pop culture celebrities, 'inflecting intelligence with a hint of glamour.'[443] As one journalist wrote in 1933, 'Bookstores are selling [brain trust professors'] books like hot cakes.'[444] This popularity and visibility of the brain trust offered Americans a unique opportunity to evaluate their relationship with experts, their understanding of intelligence and its relation to labour, and their own relationship to government and intelligence.[445]

However, not all Americans supported the existence of Roosevelt's brain trust. Debates surrounding academic involvement in government policy were prominent throughout the decade with three themes appearing most frequently in the vigorous criticism of intellectuals: that they dominated the administration; they gave it a radical orientation; and they lacked the required governmental experience.[446] At times, their brand of 'radicalism' was labelled Communistic or socialistic, adding to existing remarks concerning Roosevelt and the far-left. As the *New York Times* reported, these attacks intensified after Tugwell released a book comparing Communistic and capitalistic schools of thought, based on the thesis that Russia had proved a planned economy to be possible. 'Critics of the administration,' the article wrote, 'leaped upon it with glee.'[447] In 1934, Dr William A. Wirt, a well-known midwestern educator,

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[443] Lecklider, *Inventing the Egghead*, p. 120.
[444] Quote from an unnamed journalist, cited in ibid.
[445] Ibid, pp. 120 -121.
[446] Kirkendall, 'Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual,' p. 463.
[447] Russel Owen 'The President's 'Brain Trust' Again a Target for Critics,' *New York Times*, 1 April 1934, p. 3.

publicly accused the brain trust of plotting a Communist revolution in the United States.[448] The group responded with an article in the *New York Times*, with Berle claiming that 'President Roosevelt is not the kind of man who follows advice. He is not the kind of man to let his advisers run the show.' He also emphasised that Roosevelt, 'called in men who are supposed to have special knowledge about particular subjects and asked them for plain statements of fact.'[449] Berle's words, however, were ignored by the New Deal's staunch opponents, as was the public knowledge that Roosevelt sought advice from a variety of different individuals and organisations, including those within the business community. Instead, critics chose to stir up anti-intellectual sentiment that grew substantially in the postwar period with fears surrounding McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare. As Richard Hofstadter notes, anti-intellectualism became a familiar part of the national vocabulary of self-recrimination and intramural abuse.[450] Sloan and Benson's respective positions as a corporate conservative and an anti-Communist, Christian educator would have made them the ideal anti-intellectual candidates during the New Deal era and the postwar period. Individual comments on their opinions towards Roosevelt's brain trust are undocumented, though their representation of intellectuals in *Fresh Laid Plans* speaks volumes.

When *Fresh Laid Plans* was in production, the *Fun and Facts* team did not anticipate the backlash their cartoon on government intervention would receive. As Caroline Jack argues, the response from agricultural circles was

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[448] Anonymous, 'Dr. Wirt is Sued by 'Brain Truster,' *New York Times*, 17 October 1934, p. 25.
[449] Quote from Berle cited in, 'The President's 'Brain Trust' Again a Target for Critics', *New York Times*, p. 3.
[450] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, p. 3.

immediate and severe.[451] The cartoon caused a particular controversy in the midwestern farm belt where one St. Paul, Minnesota, newspaper editor branded it a direct attack on the Brannan Plan and a 'political weapon in farm issues.'[452] Named after the Secretary of Agriculture, Charles F. Brannan, the plan was remarkably similar to the one implemented by the owl in *Fresh Laid Plans*. In its proposal, the government sought to provide farmers with subsidies in order to keep the cost of produce at an affordable rate for consumers, without it affecting the agricultural community.[453] As the cartoon was released only a year after the plan was defeated in Congress, it is understandable that many saw *Fresh Laid Plans* as a satirical piece that opposed the allocation of government funds to farmers in need of financial stability. The backlash was so widespread that the *New York Times* covered the controversy in an article published on 18 March 1951. The article quotes the *St Paul Pioneer Press* editor, Alfred D. Stedman, who labelled the cartoon as 'a one-sided political editorial in pictures – a clever attempt to use the movies to sway public opinion on a hot political issue affecting farming.'[454]

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[451] Caroline Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series,' *Enterprise & Society* 16:3 (2015), p. 513. Further information on the backlash from *Fresh Laid Plans* can be found in, L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), pp. 73 – 74 and 'Animating Ideas: The John Sutherland Story,' *Hogan's Alley* [http://cartoonician.com/animating-ideas-the-john-sutherland-story/], accessed 26 October 2018.

[452] Quotes from the newspaper article can be found in Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt*,' p. 74 and Thomas F. Brady, 'Cartoon Film Stirs Dispute in West by Satirizing Farm Planning,' *New York Times*, 18 March 1951, p. 1.

[453] Information on the Brannan Plan can be found in, Reo Christenson, *The Brannan Plan: Farm Politics and Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959) and Virgil W. Dean, 'The Farm Policy Debate of 1949-50: Plains State Reaction to the Brannan Plan,' *Great Plains Quarterly* 773 (1993), pp. 33 – 46.

[454] Brady, 'Cartoon Film Stirs Dispute in West by Satirizing Farm Planning,' *New York Times*, p. 1.

Commenting on the controversy, Sutherland claimed that the cartoon was not aimed at the Brannan Plan, but was an 'attempt to point out the impossibility of planning our lives from a central authority.'[455] He continued, 'we were advocating that people should control themselves, on an individual, local basis. The cartoon was not aimed specifically at the farm belt or the Brannan Plan.' In defending his actions, Sutherland offered a rare public statement of his conservative views concerning government intervention in the economy.

Despite heavy criticisms, the *Fun and Facts* team was unfazed by the response of *Fresh Laid Plans*. Both Benson and Zurcher agreed that all parties handled the backlash well. On 24 April, Zurcher wrote to Benson saying that they managed to pull it off, 'partly because of your acumen and astuteness and partly because the other side did not have all the facts when they started "shooting."'[456] In addition, the *New York Times* article generated interest in the cartoon from companies that now wished to screen it for their workers. Upon hearing this, Zurcher wrote of the shared attitude amongst the team in that 'the publicity concerning this cartoon has been, on balance, beneficial.'[457] Nevertheless, the negative press surrounding *Fresh Laid Plans* did highlight an important aspect of the series. The May 1951 edition of *Educational Screen* warned educators to be wary of 'free films' such as those released by Harding. In an attack on *Fresh Laid Plans*, the article echoed the fears of the 1920s and 30s by arguing that 'You can be sure there is purpose behind every "free" film, and practically always that purpose is to the direct or

[455] Ibid.
[456] Zurcher to Benson, letter, 24 April 1951, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1951, Benson Papers.
[457] Zurcher to Benson, letter, 31 May 1951, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1951, Benson Papers.

indirect advantage of the sponsor'.[458] Evidently, concerns surrounding propaganda in educational films resurfaced in the postwar period and in the case of *Educational Screen*, critics placed the blame on cartoons from the *Fun and Facts* series.[459]

The one-sided nature of the economic cartoons by *Fun and Facts* highlights the propaganda of the series. Whilst this may have been subtle to viewers watching films such as *Going Places* and *Why Play Leapfrog?*, it became more pronounced in the anti-Communist features of *Make Mine Freedom* and *Albert in Blunderland*. As Benson was a staunch anti-Communist, having witnessed the violent power struggles in 1920s China and viewing the red menace as Godless, it is unsurprising that the subject makes an appearance in the series. The timing was ideal, with the ideological battle of the Cold War providing the perfect opportunity for the *Fun and Facts* team to produce such propaganda. Anti-Communist sentiment swept the US in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War when the alliance between the East and West disintegrated. With the US unable to strike directly at the Russians, the most vigilant patriots focused their attention on the home front.[460] Fears of domestic Communism heightened and as a result, American culture was politicised. Under the watchful eye of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), members of the entertainment industry faced particular pressures. As Tony Shaw argues, in the battle for mass opinion in

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[458] Anonymous, 'Educators, Be Wary!,' *Educational Screen* 30:5 (1951), p. 172.
[459] In the *Educational Screen* editorial, the author claims that *Fresh Laid Plans* was like the other *Fun and Facts* cartoons in terms of their propagandist nature, only worse. This sheds light on the attitude of *Educational Screen* on the threat of propaganda infiltrating educational films in the postwar period.
[460] Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 9 – 10.

the Cold War, there were few weapons more powerful than the cinema.[461] The Second World War had demonstrated the power of the moving picture and its effectiveness in disseminating particular ideologies whilst criticising others. With this in mind, HUAC began a large-scale investigation into the political leanings of those within the film industry to prevent 'subversive' messages reaching the public.[462] By imposing political standards upon its art, Stephen Whitfield claims that the United States 'came to resemble, rather uncomfortably, the sort of society to which it wishes to be contrasted.'[463]

Therefore, whilst the postwar period marked a golden age of film production, it is simultaneously regarded as 'its darkest hour'.[464] During the late 1940s and into the early 1950s, scores of producers made dozens of 'red baiting' films to avoid the risk of having their careers ruined by accusations of Communist subversion. As such, this period witnessed a tidal wave of anti-Communist film releases with titles including *The Red Menace* (1949), *I Was a Communist for the* FBI (1951), *Invasion U.S.A.* (1952), and the later *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *The Blob* (1958).[465] Of course, not all anti-Communist films were produced out of fear of repercussions from HUAC. The *Fun and Facts* series stands as a prime example of this, as do later films produced by John Sutherland Productions for companies such as the

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[461] Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 1.
[462] HUAC's attack on the film industry resulted in the blacklisting of entertainment professionals, beginning with the Hollywood Ten in 1947. In 1950, a pamphlet titled *Red Channels* labelled 151 workers within the broadcasting industry as 'Red Fascists and their sympathisers', hindering their ability to find employment.
[463] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 11.
[464] Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, p. 1.
[465] Information on these films, and others, can be found on 'Red Scare Filmography,' *University Libraries: University of Washington* [http://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=341346&p=2303736], accessed 10 February 2018.

American Petroleum Institute. The 1957 film *Destination Earth* bares great resemblance to Harding's anti-Communist cartoons in comparing the ideological differences between the US and USSR; using the example of a Martian race (the Russians) overthrowing its regime after witnessing the freedom of those living on Earth (the US).[466]

The US government also produced its own films such as the 1950 feature titled *Communism*; an Armed Forces Information Film that provided a historical overview of Communism, whilst showing how communists operated inside the US.[467] This was followed by the production of *The Big Lie* (1951) that likens the Communist regimes of the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea to Nazism.[468] Interestingly, very few anti-Communist cartoons, if any, were released during the early 1950s outside of the *Fun and Facts* series, although the CIA were instrumental in the production of the British release of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.[469] Nevertheless, the production of anti-Communist films was a serious business given the potential of the moving picture to shape public opinion during the Cold War. Though many in number, each film shared a similar objective; to attack Communism in order to present the American way of life as superior in comparison to that of Eastern Europe.

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[466] 'Destination Earth,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_6DjkrsPOw], accessed 10 February 2018.
[467] 'Communism,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4yjAb6eoCw], accessed 10 February 2018. Information on government propaganda can be found in Laura Belmonte, *Selling the America Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
[468] 'The Big Lie,' *YouTube*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaNTAUc-3tk], accessed 13 October 2018.
[469] On government involvement in the production of the animated film *Animal Farm*, see Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p. 294 and 'Animated Propaganda During the Cold War: Part One,' *Animation World Network* [https://www.awn.com/animationworld/animated-propaganda-during-cold-war-part-one], accessed 3 February 2018.

As such, *Fun and Facts*' anti-Communist cartoons fit comfortably into a culture consumed by fears of subversive influences and threats to civil liberties. Its first film, *Make Mine Freedom* (1948), introduces these themes by contrasting American society with the harsh realities of a Communist dictatorship.[470] To begin, the narrator introduces the fundamental freedoms that are pertinent to the United States. These include: the freedom to choose one's own job; the freedom of speech and to peacefully assemble; to own property; the right to vote; and to worship God in one's own way. Despite these freedoms, the citizens of the US are disgruntled. Here, *Make Mine Freedom* introduces a number of characters, all of whom represent groups that held particular grievances in the postwar period. The labourer and businessman fight amongst themselves, just as management and trade unions clashed in the 1945-46 strike wave. The politician claims to be neutral, whilst the farmer complains of the lack of aid from all parties alluding to a need for subsidies. To solve these conflicts, a foreign salesman appears and offers the warring parties a new product, ISM, that will 'cure any ailment of the body politic.' The labourer would be given higher wages, shorter hours, and job security. For the businessman, there would be increased profits and zero strikes. Meanwhile the politician would be given full governmental control and the farmer, lower costs and even perfect weather all year round. In exchange, the characters would be required to give up their freedom, as well as the freedom of future generations.

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[470] 'Make Mine Freedom,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/4050_Make_Mine_Freedom_01_01_10_02], accessed 3 February 2018.

The contract for ISM, taken directly from a scene in *Make Mine Freedom*.[471]

In forgetting the importance of their freedom, all four parties eagerly line up to sign the contract. They are stopped by John Q. Public, a character who has the best interests of the public in mind. 'Sure', he says, 'our system of free enterprise isn't perfect, but before we throw it away . . . let's turn the clock back a few years to see what it's done for us.' From here, the audience is shown a scene that is characteristic of the *Fun and Facts* series. Similar to the story of Freddy Fudso and his soap company in *Going Places*, *Make Mine Freedom* describes the growth of an automobile business from a small establishment in John Doakes' garage to a large-scale corporation. This growth, the narrator claims, is made possible due to the freedoms bestowed upon US citizens thanks to the free enterprise system. The views of Benson and Sloan are prominent here as the narrator continues, 'even in the

[471] Ibid.

Depression wages bought more food, clothing, travel, and entertainment than the wages of all the other people in the world.'[472]

After reminding the characters of the progress that freedom allows, *Make Mine Freedom* deviates from the other economic cartoons of the series by introducing overt themes of anti-Communism. John Q. Public encourages the others to try ISM and in doing so, they witness the realities of a Communist state. The labourer faces unfair working conditions and is unable to strike, whilst the businessman and farmer lose their property to the state. Those who resist, such as the politician, are placed in state concentration camps. Upon facing these grim scenarios, all five characters chase the salesman out of town and retain their freedom. The *Fun and Facts* team wished to impart an important message here. Although the free enterprise system was not perfect, its alternative was far worse.

The inclusion of anti-Communist themes in *Make Mine Freedom* did not guarantee its success, despite the hostile climate of Cold War America. In fact, the propagandistic nature of the cartoon delayed its production with the Technicolour Motion Picture Corporation. John Sutherland Productions required Technicolour to produce the 35mm prints for *Make Mine Freedom*, as well as all future cartoons. However, George Cave, Technicolour's sales manager, was reluctant to do so. In writing to Benson, Sutherland stated that Cave 'is not a very positive character and is afraid to give us a commitment for this work, as he feels we may be doing propaganda films rather than strictly

[472] When the topic of the Depression appears in correspondence between Sloan and Benson, the two often speak of how America was still in a fortunate position compared to the rest of the world as a result of the free enterprise system.

public educational films.'[473] He suggested that Benson contact the president of the corporation directly to alleviate these fears and discuss the objectives of the project. Unfortunately, Benson's letter to Technicolour is omitted from the archive, though contact from Sutherland on 25 January 1947 confirms the corporation's assistance.[474] Whilst this may have been a short delay, the anti-Communist nature of *Make Mine Freedom* almost jeopardised the cartoon's production with one of America's largest film companies.

If *Make Mine Freedom* faced difficulties due to the issue of propaganda, the *Fun and Facts* team were certain the same would happen with the fifth film in the series, *Albert in Blunderland*.[475] As the name suggests, the cartoon took inspiration from Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which Disney adapted into the 1951 film a year after the *Fun and Facts* release. It may also have been inspired by John Kendrick Bangs' 1907 political parody novel, *Alice in Blunderland: An Iridescent Dream*, in which Alice enters 'Municipal Ownership Country'.[476] As in Bangs' novel, the protagonist of *Albert in Blunderland* finds himself in an overtly political world. It begins with a radio presenter describing an economy in which 'each person produces for the welfare of the other', claiming it will provide workers with innumerable benefits. He likens this system to that of a colony of ants. When the

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[473] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 10 January 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[474] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 25 January 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[475] 'Albert in Blunderland,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgOM60BMo4s], accessed 3 February 2018.
[476] In *Alice in Blunderland: An Iridescent Dream*, Bangs makes light of a range of economic issues familiar to his readers. High taxes, corporate greed, bribery, institutional corruption, and governmental incompetence are amongst the themes of the book. See, John Kendrick Bangs, *Alice in Blunderland: An Iridescent Dream* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907).

automobile worker, Albert, wishes to see this system, he is hit over the head and enters the world of *Antrolia*.

Accompanied by a native ant, Albert begins to explore a world with full government control. He immediately loses his freedom when the government provides him with an unsatisfactory job as a state labourer. When Albert complains, the state police intervenes to silence him and his companion. The uncooperative behaviour exhibited by Albert results in the police following the pair on their travels to a movie theatre. Here, the theatre audience views a propaganda film that explains the workings of the colony's system. Whilst the 'planning board' distributes the nation's wealth amongst themselves, the lives of the everyday ants consist of media censorship, limited consumer goods, and forced voting. When the ant explains to Albert that no one dares vote against the board, he is hit over the head by the lurking state police. To remind him of his place. Following the film, the two head to the state factory for work. In the film's climax, Albert complains of the working conditions and stands his ground against the police. As the cartoon emphasises Albert's lack of freedom, he is taken to the board which sentence him to death by firing squad for disobeying the regime. In panic, Albert awakens from his dream and interrupts the radio presenter as his experience in *Antrolia* leads him to explain to the US the dangers of a totalitarian regime.

The story of *Albert in Blunderland* makes this cartoon the most overt, propagandist feature in the *Fun and Facts* series. As such, there was uncertainty as to whether MGM would agree to distribute the film in their theatres. They had previously rejected the earlier production of *Going Places*, arguing that it contained little humour, and so the team held out little hope.

However, *Albert in Blunderland* was met with little resistance. This was a surprise to Sloan who in December 1949 wrote to Benson, 'I was gratified, as you were, to have our next picture received by MGM. I rather feared they would turn it down as it certainly is supercharged with propaganda and shorter on comedy than some of our other pictures.'[477] He continued, 'I do not know just what their point of view was, but I rather think that even if it was supercharged with propaganda, the propaganda is along the lines of what we all believe in and, therefore, perhaps it is educational rather than propaganda.' [478] Given the continuing anti-Communist sentiment of the postwar period, this certainly could have been the case.

By the time *Albert in Blunderland* was ready for release in 1950, the Red Scare had reached its peak. The initial 'witch hunts' conducted by HUAC intensified during an era of McCarthyism, a period Richard Fried describes as 'the grimmest time in recent memory.' [479] Obsessions with domestic Communism exceeded the actual threat, whilst the fight abroad resulted in armed conflict in Korea. With tensions heightened, it is possible that MGM welcomed an anti-Communist propaganda film such as *Albert in Blunderland* with great enthusiasm – either willingly or as a means to avoid questioning from HUAC. Benson, on the other hand, was not so sure. In a letter to Sutherland dated June 1952, he argued that 'while *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans* were accepted for theatrical distribution, it was my opinion

[477] Sloan to Benson, letter, 2 December 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 1.

they were chiefly riding on the coat tails of the earlier pictures.'[480] Regardless of the reason, MGM willingly distributed *Albert in Blunderland* despite its propagandist stance, making it Harding's second anti-Communist feature to be released during a tense period of the Cold War.

The most famous *Fun and Facts* picture, *Meet King Joe* (1949), also contained themes of anti-Communism, however it constituted only a small proportion of the cartoon.[481] Instead, the audience was offered an amalgamation of all the themes pertinent to the series; the economy and freedom under the free enterprise system, consumerism, and anti-Communism. As such, *Meet King Joe* was an important cartoon to the project as it portrays every aspect that the *Fun and Facts* team believed made 'America the finest place in the world to live.'[482] In this feature, the viewer is reintroduced to Joe – the protagonist previously seen in *Why Play Leapfrog?* As Joe rushes out of the factory to enjoy the leisure time his employment provides, the narrator introduces him as the 'King of the Workers of the World.' This title is bestowed onto Joe as his wages allow him to buy more consumer goods than any other workers from around the globe. What is it that makes it possible for Joe to earn a good living? As the narrator explains, he is no smarter than workers in other countries, nor stronger than those in other lands. The disgruntled Joe claims that it must be because he is an American. Whilst this is true, there is a deeper meaning that stretches beyond nationality. The

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[480] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 12 June 1952, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1950, Benson Papers.
[481] 'Meet King Joe,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/4050_Meet_King_Joe_01_19_26_08], accessed 3 February 2018.
[482] A quote from the opening slide of every *Fun and Facts* cartoon. For an example, see ibid.

narrator explains this to Joe, arguing: 'Sure being an American is great, but how could you be superior to any foreigner when you or your folks might be any one of a dozen different races or religions?' He continues, 'So if you're no Superman, it must be the American way of doing things that makes you the luckiest guy in the world.' To the *Fun and Facts* team, being an American was simply not enough. It was the freedom of the free enterprise system that made Joe, and every other American, the luckiest worker in the world.

When the film explained 'the American way of doing things,' the audience is shown a familiar sequence that reappears, in one form or another, in the majority of *Fun and Facts* cartoons. Again, we are taken back to the 1800s, a turning point in industrial development, where Joe witnesses the work of his great-grandfather. The narrator explains to Joe that his ancestor was required to work longer hours for little pay, due to the lack of technology. When the American people invest capital into businesses, new tools are developed. Joe's grandfather is then able to find another job in his industry that offers higher wages for fewer hours of work. The cartoon then fast-forwards to the present where Joe himself is able to produce one thousand times more than his ancestor which, in turn, provides him with even greater wages and more leisure time. This is made possible by the freedom granted in the United States by the free enterprise system.

The economic conditions of an American worker are then compared to that of a Chinese labourer, introducing themes of anti-Communism. Whilst the minds of the everyday American were consumed by the Communist threat from the USSR, the conditions of China remained an important topic for Benson. As a missionary, first and foremost, Benson's attachment to the far

east remained strong throughout the remainder of his life. Although he left China to take up the presidency of Harding, his desire to save the country from the 'perils' of Communism did not diminish. The 1945 messages of Benson's *Looking Ahead!* column reiterate his hopes to convert China to a democratic regime. In one such piece he argued:

> Quashing Hirohito's dream of a great empire will not finish the United States' job in the Orient. Chinese, 450 million of them, already are holding out imploring hands toward America. Most of them don't know what they need but this fact only tightens our obligation because we do know what's good for them. They need the diet on which America grew strong.[483]

This essential ideological diet, described by Benson, consisted of Christianity, free enterprise, and protection for investments. 'Since the year one,' he claimed, 'China has had everything but a chance, so it had nothing.'[484] These feelings towards China proved influential in the making of *Meet King Joe*. In comparing the two workers, the narrator explains to Joe how a lack of investment in Chinese industry affects its people. Without capital for new tools, the Chinese worker makes ten cents a day moving ten gallons of kerosene, one hundred miles over ten days. An America railroad worker, however, is said to earn $10 a day by delivering 100,000 gallons of kerosene in two hours by train. According to the narrator, 'the average railroad worker has the benefit of a $20,000 investment in equipment. The Chinese "coolie's" equipment is worth only ten cents.' Therefore, it is investments that help to make American workers fortunate whilst a lack of capital hinders those in other countries. Benson hoped to remedy this situation in China by appealing to the good-will

[483] 'Looking Ahead!,' column, 1945, box B-050, folder: National Education Program 'Looking Ahead!' column 1945, Benson Papers.
[484] Ibid.

of his country. 'Will China be a good place for Americans to invest money in the postwar years?' he asked. 'Will it be a good frontier for adventurous young Americans to enter as industrial pioneers? Both these questions have the same answer . . . We will prosper with China.'[485] With this in mind, the comparative sequence within *Meet King Joe* was not only an attack on Chinese Communism, but also evidence of the harsh conditions placed upon Chinese workers without appropriate investments. Americans, on the other hand, were once again reminded of their fortunate position, made possible by the freedom of private enterprise.

A comparative scene involving a popular racial stereotype of a Chinese labourer and an American railroad worker, *Meet King Joe.*[486]

[485] Ibid.

[486] The racially charged imagery of the Chinese worker in *Meet King Joe* represents a long history of the use racial stereotypes in cartoons that date back to the silent era. As Karl F. Cohen explains, 'by the early sound era, unflattering caricatures of almost every race and nationality had appeared in animated cartoons.' Racial sensitivity did start to emerge during the 1930s when studios began to be more cautious about the content of their films and educated staff on what was and was not acceptable. However, this sensitivity to a back seat to the war effort during the forties when racial imagery was strife in animated shorts such as *Japoteurs* (A

The second half of *Meet King Joe* introduces themes of consumerism. As in *Going Places*, the cartoon highlights competition as a necessary component of the free enterprise system, providing consumers with the finest goods at a low price. For Benson, emphasising the importance of competition was essential to the series as he argued that 'In high schools today, many students are being told that competition is bad, that it will force wages down and therefore, be detrimental to workers.'[487] *Meet King Joe* set out to prove that this was not the case, claiming that industrial progress was largely the result of the competitive struggle between companies to conquer the market and increase profits. According to the picture, a rise in profits meant workers received higher wages and increased spending power, allowing them to purchase more consumer goods. This, in turn, enabled companies to spend vast sums of money in the production of new goods to be sold at lower prices. This was the cycle of America's postwar consumer culture in which goods yielded a stream of satisfaction. In *Pursuing Happiness*, Stanley Lebergott argues that some movies prove to be boring; books, dull; automobiles, unsatisfactory. Yesterday's purchase may be thrown into today's trash, yet consumers continued to spend in 'pursuit of happiness'.[488] Knowing this, the

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Superman cartoon released in 1942) and *Tokio Jokio* (1943). Imagery of America's perceived 'Yellow Peril' continued into the Cold War era, particularly after China turned Communist in 1949. As such, the imagery in *Meet King Joe* was not out of place during this era. Karl F. Cohen, *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2004), p. 50. Also, see Robert MacDougall, 'Red, Brown, and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s,' *The Journal of Popular Culture* 32:4 (1999), pp. 59 – 75.

[487] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 14 June 1948, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.

[488] Stanley Lebergott, *Pursuing Happiness: American Consumers in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 1.

Fun and Facts team sought to educate the public in the reasons behind their newfound consumer spending and by extension, defend the free enterprise system. *Meet King Joe's* narrator proudly claims that the 'American way of doing things' allows more people to buy their own homes. Whilst they formed only 7 per cent of the world's population, Americans owned 50 per cent of the radios; 54 per cent of the telephones; 92 per cent of bathtubs; and practically all the refrigerators in existence.[489] To maintain this consumer paradise, the narrator argues that capital must continue to invest in new tools and technology, whilst competition produces new products at lower prices. Only then could Joe remain 'the King of the Workers of the World.'

Unlike *Why Play Leapfrog?,* research to support the consumer statistics within *Meet King Joe* are missing from the archives. Consequently, these figures may have been exaggerated to convince Americans of the benefits the free enterprise system after the turbulent years of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, *Meet King* Joe does highlight the unprecedented growth of America's postwar consumer culture. According to Lebergott's research, 95 percent of homes owned a radio during the 1950s whilst the percentage of televisions increased exponentially from 9 per cent in 1950 to 87 percent in 1960.[490] In addition, 94 per cent of households contained electrical lighting in 1950, an increase of 15 percent from the previous decade.[491]

Home ownership also rose as Americans left their rented urban properties to move to the suburbs. In 1940, 43.6 per cent of American owned their own home. This increased to 55 percent in 1950 and by a further 6.9

[489] Statistics taken directly from *Meet King Joe*.
[490] Lebergott, *Pursuing Happiness*, p. 137.
[491] Ibid, p. 113.

percent in 1960.[492] The ability to own property was aided by the creation of the Veterans Administration (VA) mortgage insurance program as part of the GI Bill. This program was intended to reward veterans by allowing them to obtain mortgages with low down payments, whilst simultaneously stimulating housing market construction.[493] However, figures within this programme reveal a startling aspect of American consumer culture and, by extension, the intended audience of *Meet King Joe*. As a child of the Consumer Republic, Lizabeth Cohen recalls the absence of ethnic minorities in her suburban neighbourhoods, claiming there were only a handful of highly educated Taiwanese immigrants but no African Americans.[494] Statistics on mortgage characteristics in the New York-north-eastern New Jersey Metropolitan Area in 1950 confirm this exclusion. Of the 449,458 mortgaged properties where the race of the owner was reported, only 1.7 per cent belonged to 'non-whites'.[495] African Americans could afford to buy their own homes, but finding mortgages and properties proved to be difficult. As Cohen argues, the VA channelled resources through private banking and real estate interests meaning that African Americans were excluded from the promise of mass home ownership.[496] Therefore, it is important to remember when watching these films that not all Americans benefitted from the free enterprise system the *Fun and Facts* series celebrates.

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[492] 'Historical Census of Housing Tables,' *United States Census Bureau* [https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/owner.html], accessed 4 February 2018.
[493] Richard K. Green and Susan M. Wachter, 'The American Mortgage in Historical and International Context,' *Penn IUR Publications* 1 (2005), p. 96.
[494] Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, p. 6.
[495] Ibid, p. 171.
[496] Ibid.

It is likely that cartoons such as *Meet King Joe* were produced for, and made successful by, a specific group of people. The white, middle-class men that dominated the postwar Consumer Republic. Notably, the characters throughout the *Fun and Facts* series are distinctively white and overwhelmingly male. When the narrator in *Meet King Joe* explains to the protagonist that being an American does not immediately make him superior to any 'foreigner', as he and his family may come from a dozen of different races or religions, the non-American characters that appear alongside Joe are, again (and rather astoundedly), all white. Consequently, there is a very obvious lack of ethnic minorities in the series. When a non-American, non-European, character does appear – such as the Chinese worker – the animators employ the use of racially charged imagery to separate the protagonist from the foreign 'otherness' of Chinese ethnicity and the Communist regime.

The series also excludes the role of women in America's postwar consumer culture. The 1950s witnessed a rise in female consumer habits with an increase of 400 percent in targeted advertisements between 1945 and 1960.[497] Peacetime employment rates grew rapidly with 40 percent of all women over the age of sixteen holding a job by the end of the decade, providing an independent income and higher purchasing power.[498] Even those that remined in domestic roles within the family enjoyed increased

[497] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York Basic Book, 1992), p. 171. For further work on the role of women in America's postwar consumer culture, see Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic* and Lawrence B Glickman (ed.), *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1999).
[498] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 161.

participation in the growing consumer culture through a boom in household appliances aimed at the nation's homemakers. As Vice President Richard Nixon explained in the famous 'kitchen debate' in Moscow, 'In America, we like to make life easier for women.'[499] The products intended to do so brought women into America's purchasing scene. However, just as the series ignored the nation's rich ethnic and cultural heritage, *Fun and Facts* glosses over the role of women in the free enterprise system. In doing so, the series mirrors pervasive notions of normative whiteness in both American industry and Protestantism. As members of these groups, Sloan and Benson used the series to emphasise their belief that it was the white, male American worker that possessed the ability to maintain the free enterprise system, excluding both ethnic minorities and women.

Style and Substance

In regards to the content of the series, many would find the topic of the free enterprise system a potentially dull subject for a film series. With ten-minutes of economic explanations aimed at both adults and children, the *Fun and Facts* team required a means of presenting the economy in an interesting fashion. Their solution was to use animation, a medium that witnessed an unprecedented growth during the war as a powerful propaganda tool that influenced the masses. The defining features of animated shorts, the vibrant colours and slapstick comedy, offered producers an entertaining technique in

[499] Quote from Vice President Richard Nixon cited in, 'The Kitchen Debate transcript, 1959,' *Central Intelligence Agency* [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1959-07-24.pdf], accessed 13 October 2018.

which they could disseminate important political messages. Sloan and Benson witnessed the wartime success of large animation studios and sought to replicate their methods, particularly those of Disney, to produce a series that would attract attention of both adults and children alike. Their priority throughout the project was to educate as many Americans as possible and, as other artists had proved, animation provided a way to attract viewers from across a broad spectrum. Furthermore, animation had a longstanding reputation of providing viewers with entertainment. By utilising this medium, Sloan and Benson believed they would revolutionise economic education by making the process more 'fun', hence the name of the series.[500]

The date of the initial decision to use animation for the series is unknown, however it was a long-standing area of interest for Sloan who had intended to speak with Walt Disney about the matter for 'many years.'[501] GM itself had experimented with the use of stop motion animation in its 1939 production *Round and Round*, alluding to Sloan's desire to move away from the traditional live-action motion picture that had failed to attract the public's attention during the interwar years. His attitude towards the series' success, however, was rather tentative in its early stages. Benson and Sutherland, on the other hand, were confident in the use of animation for *Fun and Facts*. In speaking with Zurcher, Benson argued that 'The fact it is technicolour and is of the Disney style cartoons will in my opinion immediately make it very popular.' [502]

[500] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 5 October 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.
[501] Sloan to Benson, letter, 23 September 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.
[502] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 5 October 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

Sutherland shared Benson's optimism, believing they were 'on the threshold of a new medium of education regarding the American way of life.'[503] These attitudes continued to grow as each cartoon found success in either primary or secondary channels of distribution.

After being turned down by Walt Disney, Sloan and Benson approached John Sutherland Productions to produce the *Fun and Facts* series. Sutherland Productions specialised in nontheatrical animation produced primarily for wealthy corporate conservatives. In an interview with Disney historian Jim Korkis, Bill Scott, a former voice actor, writer, and producer at the company, described his employment under Sutherland:

> I wrote institutional, educational, and just plain propaganda films for big businesses like GM, DuPont, AT&T, Union Carbide, and the American Petroleum Institute. I wrote apologies, excuses, descriptions. We did TV commercials and industrials. These were in essence didactic films: films to persuade, films to impress.[504]

Scott's experiences here represent the company during its golden era of the 1950s. In its humble beginnings, the studio partnered with ex-Disney lyricist and screenwriter Larry Morey for a six-part series of entertainment shorts. Titled the *Daffy Ditties*, these films were inspired by George Pal's *Puppetoons* series by its use of puppet animation alongside Technicolour. The series proved to be unpopular, forcing its distributor United Artist to cancel the project after only six films. From here, Sutherland and Morey parted ways; Morey

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[503] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 9 November 1946, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[504] Interview with Bill Scott by Jim Korkis in, Keith Scott, *The Moose That Roared: The Story of Jay Ward, Bill Scott, a Flying Squirrel, and a Talking Moose* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2000), p. 42.

returned to Disney and Sutherland focused his attention on industrial films.[505] The *Fun and Facts* cartoons marked the next series to follow *Daffy Ditties*, steering Sutherland Productions down the path described by Scott. Later propaganda titles included those such as *A Is for Atom* (1956), sponsored by General Electric; *Destination Earth* (1957), for the American Petroleum Institute; and *Rhapsody of Steel* (1959), for U.S. Steel.[506]

Although Sutherland's films shared similarities in both their sponsors and their messages, the style of the cartoons varied widely. According to Amid Amidi, Sutherland generally kept his distance from the design and animation process, preferring to focus his attention on the story and script.[507] This provided his animators with unlimited creative freedom. As former employee Eyvind Earle recalled, 'I was the absolute boss. I never had to check with anybody or show what I had done to get it approved.'[508] As a result, each of Sutherland's stand-alone films have their own distinctive look depending on the artist. This was not the case, however, for a series such as *Fun and Facts*. For these cartoons, the style remained similar with little changes to character design. In keeping in line with Sloan's request for a 'Disney technique' in which characters would reappear throughout the series, several figures showed up in more than one cartoon. This seemed to satisfy the demands of Sloan and

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[505] Information on the *Daffy Ditties* series can be found on *The Big Cartoon Database* [https://www.bcdb.com/cartoons/Other_Studios/S/John_Sutherland_Productions/Daffy_Ditties/], accessed 4 February 2018.
[506] 'A is For Atom,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/a_is_for_atom], accessed 5 February 2018, 'Destination Earth,' *Internet Archive*, and 'Rhapsody of Steel,' *Internet Archive* [https://archive.org/details/rhapsody-of-steel-1959], accessed 5 February 2018.
[507] Amidi, *Cartoon Modern*, p. 46.
[508] Eyvind Earle cited in, ibid.

Benson who, when criticising storyboards, focused more on the script rather than the sketches or animation.

To enhance his animation with the use of colour, Sutherland relied on the methods of the Technicolour Corporation. The bright, bold colours of the Technicolour process became a hallmark for both live-action and animated films during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. When this technology was first made available in 1916, it was limited to a two-colour system of red and green. As a result, early Technicolour films carried a washed-out, dull coloured effect that was, nevertheless, impressive for its time. The turning point in Technicolour's colour system came in the early 1930s with animation pioneer Walt Disney. The company had been experimenting with the use of a full-colour system and required an animation studio to 'prove the process beyond any doubt'.[509] It was first used in Disney's *Silly Symphonies* series for the 1932 production of *Flowers and Trees*. Both Disney and its distribution company United Artists approached the use of colour cautiously, fearing it would incur unreasonable costs during a time of economic hardship. The film, however, was a success and became the first animated production to win an Oscar later that year. The positive reaction to it changed the course of the film industry as Roy Disney argued, 'we feel that colour has added so much to the Symphonies that we are convinced it would be wrong to consider any other course.'[510] After Disney's success, Technicolour's new system extended

[509] Richard Neupert, 'Painting a Plausible World: Disney's Colour Prototypes,' in *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, ed. Eric Smoodin (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 107.
[510] Roy Disney cited in, Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 81.

throughout Hollywood and was used in both live-action and animated features from studios such as RKO, Warner Bros., and MGM.[511]

By the late 1940s, Technicolour's full-colour system was heralded as the finest colour technology in the film industry. As a result, Sutherland grew concerned when Cave refused to commit to the *Fun and Facts* series due to issues regarding the propagandist nature of the cartoons. Although this situation was remedied by Benson's appeal to Technicolour President Herbert Kalmus, the series faced a string of delays as a result of the company's popularity. Nevertheless, Sutherland continued to defend its use:

> Technicolour is still far behind schedule in processing and we do not anticipate an answer print on the first Harding College picture until June 15th at the earliest, and we may not get a delivery until July 15th. However, after seeing the other 16mm colour processing that is on the market today I believe it is wise to wait to get the best, which today is Technicolour.[512]

If the *Fun and Facts* cartoons were to stand out amongst a growing market of animation, the project had to meet the picture quality of the industry. As such, Sloan, Benson, and Sutherland patiently awaited the finished prints from Technicolour to ensure their animation received the best, bold colours the industry had to have offer.

Alongside the brightly coloured animation, humour was also a staple of twentieth century American cartoons. In the early days of animation, emphasis was largely placed on physical comedy, or 'slapstick' gags, given

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[511] For further information on the history and use of Technicolour, see Steve Neale (ed.), *The Classical Hollywood Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), James Layton and David Pierce, *The Dawn of Technicolour, 1915 – 1935* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2015), and Richard W. Haines, *Technicolour Movies: The History of Dye Transfer Printing* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003).
[512] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 21 April 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

that most films were silent until the late 1920s. As prevalent features of comedic animation, these gags had the potential to become dull and repetitive. In response, writer and producer Dave Fleischer introduced gags with a focus on anthropomorphism.[513] In the cartoons produced by Fleischer Studios in the 1920s and 30s, automobiles, aircraft, flowers, and even milk bottles came to life. During the 1940s, slapstick gags were often incorporated into 'chase' comedy made famous by series such as MGM's *Tom & Jerry* (1940) and Warner Bros. *Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner* (1948). As cartoons grew in popularity, these comedic aspects continued to evolve in order to attract larger audiences. Between 1941 and 1954, MGM's animation unit was led by the pioneer animator and director Tex Avery. Though Avery's work was aimed at a family audience, his humour was often directed at adults with cartoons such as *Red Hot Riding Hood* full of sexual innuendos.[514] As the evolution of comedy had proved, animation was no longer a genre exclusively for children.

With the prevalence of humour in animated films, it is understandable that MGM expected a certain degree of comedy from the *Fun and Facts* series. This was more so with Avery at the helm. However, whilst the Harding cartoons do contain humour, they were first and foremost educational pieces. As such, the *Fun and Facts* team once again looked to Disney for inspiration. In the mid-1930s, Disney employed specialist gag-men who produced a total of 1.5 million jokes by the end of the decade. Although these gags were important to the studio, Disney was more concerned with dignified comedy

[513] 'Dr Toon: The evolution of Animated Comedy,' *Animation World Network* [https://www.awn.com/animationworld/dr-toon-evolution-animated-comedy], accessed 5 February 2018.
[514] James Clarke, *Animated Films* (London: Penguin Random House, 2007).

that would not distract viewers from the overarching story. As John Mundy and Glyn White argue, slapstick gags increasingly gave way to, or were contained within stronger story lines and narratives that were designed to 'elicit emotional responses.'[515] A similar technique appeared in the *Fun and Facts* cartoons, where the message outweighed the comedic value in importance. Very few scenes contain humour. Those that do focus almost entirely on the slapstick genre, for example the golfer in *Make Mine Freedom* who swings his club wildly in frustration, hitting a tree and hurting himself in the process. *Meet King Joe* uses a number of slapstick gags in its sequence on consumerism, making light of how products can be desirable but also frustrating. For example, a snoozing father is rudely awakened by his son playing a loud radio. After falling back asleep, he is disturbed by the telephone and throws it out of the window only to have it bounce back inside and hit him on the head. The refrigerator is his next attacker, throwing ice at him from the newly installed iced compartment. Though few in number, these scenes were representative of the comedy used in mid-twentieth century animation. Producing cartoons that excluded humour entirely was a risk, as evident by the conflict between Sutherland Productions and MGM. Consequently, *Fun and Facts* was forced to inject humour, if only a little, into a series designed to educate, first and foremost.

As an educational films series that focused on economic and ideological matters, *Fun and Facts* successfully incorporated a range of topics pertinent to the free enterprise system. Its cartoons were diverse, focusing on a

[515] John Mundy and Glyn White, *Laughing Matters: Understanding Film, Television and Radio Comedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 154.

particular aspect of the economy or the wider issues of private enterprise and the threats against it. The introductory cartoon, *Make Mine Freedom*, provided the viewer with a glimpse of what was to come by presenting the main themes of the series. Freedom in the economy, consumerism, and anti-Communism formed the foundation of the series and provide a backdrop for specific themes concerning wages and prices, competition, and government control. Interestingly, the cartoons did not shy away from particular forms of government intervention, despite protest, in scenes such as those found in *Going Places*. Although the *Fun and Facts* team were against government intervention, they remained true to the economic system they were trying to defend which, on occasion, required outside influences. This may have also been one of many attempts to silence critics who denounced the series as propaganda. As a project that portrayed unwavering support for a particular economic model, cries of propaganda were unavoidable and even exacerbated by the anti-Communist pictures of *Make Mine Freedom* and *Albert in Blunderland*. In addition, the anti-government intervention cartoon *Fresh Laid Plans* produced a nationwide backlash against the series, furthering criticisms of producer bias. Nevertheless, the series continued to produce additional cartoons in a style that closely resembled the Disney model. Whilst the *Fun and Facts* cartoons may appear different to those from Disney, the use of animation, reoccurring characters, and controlled humour were inspired by America's leading studio and pioneer animators; culminating in a ten-part economic film series that persevered through rising costs and negative publicity and continued to be shown for decades to come. The

success of the *Fun and Facts* series is yet to be determined, though its triumph has already been suggested.

Chapter Five

'The Sort of Propaganda That Parents Should Take Their Children to See'

The content and style of the *Fun and Facts* series represented a shift in the production of twentieth century animated propaganda that largely contributed to the reception of the cartoons. The rise in the quality of educational films allowed Sloan, Benson, and Sutherland to embark on an ambitious project influenced by conservative economic thinking. In the past, such efforts had failed to capture public interest. In a postwar era dominated by motion pictures, the success of *Fun and Facts* had the potential to be far greater than the corporate sponsored films of the 1930s and 40s. The initial viewer reception gathered from early screen tests hinted at this success, particularly within the world of right-wing business. In this arena, *Fun and Facts* was in high demand. But could the series influence the general population? The *Fun and Facts* team fought to place the cartoons in theatres, classrooms, workplaces, and, in time, the television sets of the average American home. To reach a larger audience, Harding's cartoons faced numerous hurdles. Each production was put through a rigorous test in order to appeal to an array of viewers from the Sloan Foundation, MGM, and test audiences. If successful, only then would a cartoon reach the wider public where the films were often met with mixed responses that included high praise from the right and withering criticism from the left. With such a varied viewership, the *Fun and Facts* series thrived in certain areas whilst it simultaneously failed to win public interest in others. An examination of regional and national responses, together with further analysis on the process of distribution and debates over ideological content, will help

to determine where the *Fun and Facts* cartoons succeeded in disseminating the conservative economic ideology of Sloan and Benson's corporate-evangelical alliance.

Before *Fun and Facts* could be released for public viewing, each of the cartoons within the series first needed the approval of the Sloan Foundation. Whilst the Foundation's name did not appear on the credits, its board of directors was the dominant force behind the project and could withdraw its financial support without hesitation. The example of New York University's 1939 Educational Film Institute stood as a stark reminder of how quickly this could happen if the films failed to reach the standards of Sloan and his associates. The EFI closed in 1940 after the completion of only three films. Unfortunately for NYU, these films failed to meet the ideological benchmark set by foundation director Dr Harold S. Sloan who hoped to bombard 'the American mind with elementary economic principles.' Naturally, these 'elementary economic principles' were a direct reference to the free enterprise system and films that encouraged more nuanced debate, such as those produced by the EFI, were swiftly rejected.[516]

Although Harold Sloan's reign over the foundation came to an end in 1945, the organisation's firm stance on economic propaganda did not falter in the post-war period. In 1949, Sloan co-authored *A Dictionary of Economics* with his successor and political science professor Arnold Zurcher.[517] Even

[516] More information on the Sloan Foundation and its project with the NYU Educational Film Institute can be found in chapter one, as well as Dan Streible, 'The Failure of the NYU Educational Film Institute,' in *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United Sates*, eds. Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 271 – 294.
[517] Harold S. Sloan and Arnold J. Zurcher, *A Dictionary of Economics* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1949).

though this publication was first and foremost a dictionary of economic terms, the collaboration between the two signified a shared ideological commitment. From the beginning of the *Fun and Facts* project, Zurcher adopted an uncompromising approach to the production process that mirrored his predecessor's handling of the EFI. On 29 November 1946, shortly after *Make Mine Freedom* entered production, Zurcher contacted Benson to outline the foundation's grievances concerning the proposed contract for the next three films. The contract gave the foundation and Harding College one month to discuss the content of the script for *Make Mine Freedom* before deciding if it would be produced. Zurcher disagreed with this process and raised the issue with Benson:

> In the case of these three scripts I think Mr Sutherland should agree to give you and us an indefinite amount of time to make up our minds . . . We do not believe we should be held down to some specific period of a month or two to make up our minds to go ahead with production, our opportunity in that respect lapsing after that period. It is my belief that if Mr Sutherland does not want to give you an indefinite period for making a decision as to actual production of approved scripts, or at least a reasonably long period, the contract for writing the scripts should not be signed.[518]

In order to ensure that each cartoon met the ideological standards of the Sloan Foundation, Zurcher remained firm with his demands to have an indefinite time period in which the scripts could be fully scrutinised and edited if required. Sutherland obliged, knowing that the content of the cartoons, and the future of the series, was ultimately under the control of the foundation.[519]

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[518] Zurcher to Benson, letter, 29 November 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

[519] Sutherland compromised with Zurcher on this issue and offered a 90-day period upon receiving the scripts, of which the latter agreed. Benson to Zurcher, letter, 2 December 1946, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1946, Benson Papers.

The agreement between Sutherland and the Sloan Foundation enabled Zurcher to ensure the quality of the work met his expectations. It did not guarantee the financial stability of the project, nor the release of the cartoons. Following a showing of *Make Mine Freedom* at the foundation's headquarters, Sloan concluded that the *Fun and Facts* team had 'developed an interesting experiment that looks good' but emphasised the need to 'thoroughly test out the reaction of others.' He continued, 'we must not let our enthusiasm, or interest, in the matter prejudice the fact that it is the great mass of people that must be satisfied and find the film interesting and instructive, rather than we ourselves.'[520] Pleasing the Sloan Foundation appeared to be only half the battle. The opinion of the board of directors was paramount for having the films released to test audiences. However, if they failed to grab the public's interest, the project could still be terminated.

To measure public opinion, initial screen tests were conducted by Benson almost immediately after the completion of a cartoon. Benson was eager to release *Make Mine Freedom* through both primary and secondary channels of distribution as soon as possible, discussing the arrangements of test audiences with Sloan shortly after the private screening. For post-war industrial films, such as those within the *Fun and Facts* series, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf argues that businesses were keen to exploit audiences composed of a variety of groups and organisations.[521] Though the workplace may have been the initial target, where millions of workers were exposed to corporate

[520] Sloan to Benson, letter, 30 June 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[521] Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 1.

sponsored propaganda, the business community orchestrated economic education programs that extended beyond the confines of the factory. Schools, churches, and civic organisations faced a barrage of free enterprise propaganda, as whole communities, such as Weirton, West Virginia, participated in industrial led 'Americanism Weeks' that focused on the economy.[522] Regardless of the sponsor, the aim of these efforts remained the same; to construct a vision of Americanism that emphasised free enterprise, individual rights, and abundance.

The *Fun and Facts* team contributed to the targeting of numerous groups by organising a varied viewership for their initial test screenings. On 23 June 1947, Benson outlined his plan for the series' first cartoon in a letter addressed to Sloan. After obtaining five or more 35mm prints, he planned to supervise a number of showings in order 'to test public acceptance and to obtain constructive criticism.' The viewers Benson had chosen for the test were composed of 'labour groups, high school groups, college groups, civic groups, theatrical groups and theatrical men of influence.'[523] His selection process, however, does not appear in his correspondence with Sloan and is not discussed in other letters with either Zurcher or Sutherland. The size of

[522] Specific examples of free enterprise propaganda can be found in chapter one (for the interwar period) and chapter three (for the postwar period), as well as works such as Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003) and William Bird, *"Better Living": Advertising, Media, and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership, 1935 – 1955* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999). For more on 'American Weeks' see, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, 'Cold War Americanism: Business, Pageantry, and Antiunionism in Weirton, West Virginia,' *Business History Review* 77:1 (2003), pp. 61 – 91 and Richard M. Fried, *The Russians are Coming! The Russians are Coming!: Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold War America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[523] Benson to Sloan, letter, 23 June 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

the test groups, as well as their locations and gender ratios, are also unknown. Nevertheless, the comments gathered reflect a variety of opinions that suggest the selection of viewers was an objective process, rather than a subjective one.

The initial reaction to the series' first cartoon, *Make Mine Freedom*, was overwhelmingly positive. As viewers watched, Benson encouraged them to complete a simple questionnaire in order to share their opinions with the *Fun and Facts* team. These questionnaires outlined the significance of the screen tests and informed the participants that their reactions would 'have considerable bearing on the planning of future films.' The first question, and perhaps the most important one, asked viewers if the film helped to explain the 'fundamental pattern of our American economy.' This was the first of three 'yes or no' questions. The remaining five questions provided viewers with the opportunity to discuss the film in their own words and included prompts such as: 'What is the most definite impression the film leaves with you?'; 'What section of the film did you like best?'; 'What section did you like least?'; and 'Do you think this film and similar ones should have a wide showing?'[524] Unfortunately, the completed questionnaires appear to have been destroyed given their absence from the Benson Papers at Harding. However, individual comment cards from these test screenings are accessible. Those who commented 'very good', 'a wonderful idea', and 'keep this up', responded with opinions such as 'very fine and the kind of pictures we need in these trying times' and 'Great picture. Should show more of the same thing. Stop this Communism.' Others remarked on the use of the motion picture directly,

[524] Viewer Questionnaire for 'The Secret of American Prosperity [*Make Mine Freedom*],' questionnaire, 23 June 1947, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers.

arguing 'I believe you took a simple, sensible way to dramatise a serious subject' and 'I think this type of film is the greatest force that can be used to show the American people what a blessing it is to live in this country.'[525] For these viewers, the use of film was successful in showcasing the complexities of the economy.

However, not all viewers agreed that the use of animation was suitable for a serious economic educational series. One participant raised this issue on their comment card, writing: 'The short was very well presented but do you think it is a wise subject to put up for entertainment?'[526] Attitudes such as this highlight a significant hurdle the *Fun and Facts* team faced in producing animation on a serious topic. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, theatrical cartoons were made, first and foremost, for the entertainment of general audiences in movie theatres.[527] Although studios such as Warner Bros. and MGM produced an array of propaganda films between 1941 and 1945, these cartoons were designed to entertain as well as instruct, inform, or persuade. For example, the Warner Bros. cartoon *Tokio Jokio* (1943) is littered with exaggerated anti-Japanese racial stereotypes and slapstick humour to appeal to wartime audiences and exploit deep-seated prejudice.[528] Even Disney, who previously limited humour within their cartoons, released an anti-tank rifle training film in which they portrayed Adolf Hitler as an idiotic, child-like

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[525] 'Preview Card Comments on Cartoon *Make Mine Freedom,'* comments, undated, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Michael S. Shull and David E. Wilt, *Doing Their Bit: Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939 – 1945* second edition (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004), p. 9.
[528] 'Tokio Jokio,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlUld1yXKRo], accessed 20 March 2018.

figure.[529] Consequently, American theatre goers expected high levels of entertainment in animated pictures. Whilst *Make Mine Freedom* did include humour, it was not to the extent to which audiences were accustomed.

The age group for audiences of animated shorts was also an issue for some viewers who participated in the early screen tests. Several comment cards suggested that *Make Mine Freedom* was best suited for younger audiences, rather than adults. Such comments included: 'A splendid subject. Should be shown to all school children'; 'Things of this type are splendid for the younger generation'; and 'As propaganda, it was pretty crude for adults, but as an approach – aimed at about age 12 – it was OK.'[530] Though slightly older, the film did seem to appeal to high school students. The superintendent of Jonesboro High School, Arkansas, praised the feature in a letter to Benson in which he described his belief that 'the picture should be shown to students throughout the nation.'[531] Although cartoons largely attracted the attention of younger viewers, who were also one of the target audiences for the *Fun and Facts* series, the genre was far from a child-only category of entertainment by the late 1940s. As Michael Shull and David Wilt argue, the animation industry could not afford to make only 'kiddie' cartoons during the height of film production as this would have severely restricted the genre's appeal: to Saturday morning matinees in neighbourhood movie houses.[532] Cartoons were an integral part of virtually all motion picture theatre programs for more

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[529] 'Stop That Tank,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iL_6IyH9gs], accessed 20 March 2018.
[530] Viewer comments for *Make Mine Freedom*, comments, undated, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers.
[531] Benson to Sloan, letter, 3 November 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[532] Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, p. 9.

than 30 years (until the demise of the double feature system in the 1960s and the broadcasting of cartoons on television) and so animation relied on wider audiences that included older generations of viewers. The Tex Avery cartoons produced for MGM are a fine example of how the industry evolved, displaying a mix of slapstick comedy that appealed to children and humour concerning adult themes that included sex, status, and survival.[533] Therefore, it was likely that the style of *Make Mine Freedom* led some viewers to believe that the film was most appropriate for younger viewers. The issue was possibly rooted, once again, in the realm of entertainment. Warner Bros' animation editor Chuck Jones argued that the 'basic goal in these films [adult cartoons] was to make people laugh . . . and we certainly didn't have children in mind.'[534] As *Make Mine Freedom* focussed on a serious topic and contained little humour, it deviated from existing themes within adult animation. Instead, the film mirrored educational pieces that were often restricted to the confines of the classroom.

Questions surrounding the decision to use animation arose directly with the *Fun and Facts* team shortly after the screen tests began. In a letter to Sutherland dated 29 September 1947, Benson shared the preliminary results of the screenings:

> The beginning of the results imply that perhaps live action is better than cartoons for the message that we are trying to impart. We have checked adult groups, particularly educational leaders and leading businessmen nearly all of whom seem to think that the cartoons have always been used as a means of putting over something funny and that they fail to put over a serious subject to the best interest.

[533] More on the adult themes within Tex Avery's cartoons can be found in, John Mundy and Glyn White, *Laughing Matters: Understanding Film, Television and Radio Comedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 156.
[534] Chuck Jones quoted in, ibid, p. 158.

Though he was keen to point out that these were early comments on the series and that 'the result may look different later', Benson also noted that it 'may be advisable then to sprinkle in one or two live action pictures and see what the result is.'[535] Concerned with these comments, as well as the idea of using live action films for the purpose of economic education, Sutherland asked Benson if the viewers reached this conclusion of their own volition rather than through the result of a leading question.[536] 'In every case', Benson assured him, 'it was volunteered by them . . . Men simply got up and raised the question themselves and presented their own ideas to the effect that to them the cartoon was always used for comical stuff and therefore, people expected something funny when they saw a cartoon and were not prepared for considering something serious.'[537] With so many comments suggesting a failure to educate adults through the use of animation, it is surprising that the second cartoon of the series, *Going Places*, entered production as planned and was not pulled by the Sloan Foundation.

The survival of *Make Mine Freedom*, and indeed the rest of the series, may be largely attributed to the positive reception received from the oil community in Oklahoma City. In his correspondence with Sutherland, Benson explained that none of the 600 oil men who had viewed the film had reached the same conclusion as earlier audiences. Even when this issue was raised

[535] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 29 September 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[536] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 2 October 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[537] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 8 October 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

with them directly, 'none of them seemed to think so.'[538] Although the overall size of the test screenings is unclear, the audience in Oklahoma appears to have been one of the largest to witness an early showing of *Make Mine Freedom*.

The significance of Oklahoma City to the business community was immeasurable, particularly in the realm of oil and mineral resources. In the first half of the twentieth century, Oklahoma was the largest producer of US oil alongside the state of California. Major oil discoveries resulted in an influx of workers and the creation of 'boomtown' communities that changed the economic and social landscape of the area. It was a phenomenon that reached the studios of Hollywood, culminating in the production of films such as MGM's *Boomtown* (1940) and Walter Wagner Productions' *Tulsa* (1949).[539] As Oklahoma was a key industrial region, the reaction from oil workers would have provided a much-needed boost for the *Fun and Facts* team who, despite receiving innumerable positive comments on their first feature, continued to focus on the issue of animation. Although individual feedback is unavailable, the overall response satisfied the Sloan Foundation. In a letter to Benson, Sloan announced, 'I am glad to note the favourable reaction . . . it appears clear to me that we have something here that is well worth while and a real

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[538] Ibid.

[539] For more information on the significance of the oil industry in Oklahoma, see Linda W. Reese and Patricia Loughlin (eds.), *Main Street Oklahoma: Stories of Twentieth Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), John W. Morris (ed.), *Drill Bits, Picks, and Shovels: A History of Mineral Resources in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1982), and 'Oil Field Culture,' *Oklahoma Historical Society* [http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=OI003], accessed 25 March, 2018. For information on the films *Boomtown* and *Tulsa*, see Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann, *Ecology and Popular Film: Cinema on the Edge* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009).

contribution toward the objective that we have in mind. I am very well satisfied with what has been accomplished.'[540] Positive reviews from the Oklahoma test screening pleased Sloan and prevented the foundation from reconsidering their contributions to the *Fun and Facts* project.

The news that Harding College had produced a pro-free enterprise animated short spread quickly from those who had participated in the screen tests in Oklahoma and elsewhere. Almost immediately, the *Fun and Facts* team were bombarded with a string of requests from major US companies hoping to screen the film to their workers. On 12 May 1947, Sutherland contacted Benson to inform him that Hal Curtis, vice-president of the Public Relations Department at the Shell Oil Company, and Howard Chase, executive of General Foods, were keen to attend a showing of *Make Mine Freedom* and make financial contributions to the project if they approved of its message.[541] General Foods, in particular, was a potentially strong ally for Harding College, especially given their shared ideological stance. The company's top management was extremely active in the NAM and participated in nationwide anti-New Deal and anti-labour propaganda.[542] Its vice-president, Thomas Spates, fought to keep unions out of the business whilst trying to improve labour-management relations through PR campaigns. Like Benson, he was a fierce anti-Communist and believed that it was up to management to

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[540] Sloan to Benson, letter, 29 October 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[541] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 12 May 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.
[542] For more details on the ideology of the management of General Foods, see Howell John Harris, *The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 36. And Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 191.

save the US from the grips of socialism.[543] Shell Oil's and General Foods' reaction to *Make Mine Freedom* is undocumented but nevertheless, the interest these companies had shown was a positive sign for the project. The film attracted the attention of those who shared the same interests and economic principles as the architects of the series. Other companies who wished to see the film in its early stages included the American Iron and Steel Institute, the Advertising Society, and Sears, Roebuck and Company.[544]

Primary Distribution Channels

Make Mine Freedom appears to be the only film in the *Fun and Facts* series that was subjected to rigorous test screenings. Whilst there are no explanations for this, it is likely that the decision to abandon audience screen tests for the remainder of the series was linked to the process of primary distribution. On 7 November 1947, Sloan informed Benson that he had contacted MGM regarding the matter and provided the company with a 35mm version of the film.[545] Although Sloan had continuously utilised the 'Disney-technique' throughout the series, he did not approach Disney Studios to enquire of the possibility of releasing the film through its distribution channels. During the postwar period, Disney lost its superiority within the animated film

[543] Anonymous, 'Job of Saving U.S. From Socialism,' *New York Times*, 2 April 1949, p. 22.
[544] According to Sutherland, the Iron and Steel Institute were interested in creating their own motion picture project but were providing unsatisfactory results: Sutherland to Benson, letter, 30 June 1947, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1947, Benson Papers. Interestingly, Benson attended the organisation's 55th General Meeting shortly after, where he delivered a speech to institute's members. This was undoubtedly a perfect opportunity to advertise the film to those within the iron and steel industries and encourage them to support Harding's film project rather than creating their own.
[545] Sloan to Benson, letter, 7 November 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

genre due to the emerging success of studios such as MGM and Warner Bros. Whilst Disney dominated the Academy Awards in the 1930s, MGM swept the awards from 1943 to 1946 and again in 1948 (interrupted only by the debut of Warner's Sylvester and Tweetie in 1947). By the time *Make Mine Freedom* was completed, MGM was the leading animation studio in the US.[546]

After choosing MGM as a potential distributor, Sloan personally contacted MGM President Nicholas M. Schenck. Like Sloan, Schenck was an incredibly active president within his company. According to one of his chief assistants, there was 'no branch of this business he doesn't know. He keeps tabs on every little thing. The minute a picture is released, there he is on the telephone, the reviews in hand.'[547] With such hands-on experience, it was said that Schenck could determine immediately whether or not a film would 'go over with the public.'[548] As such, it is likely that Sloan thought it best to contact Schenck directly, rather than approaching the executive of MGM's animation division, Fred Quimby. The decision to do so was the right call for Sloan who was contacted by Schenck himself, only a few days after submitting *Make Mine Freedom* to the studio. Schenck greatly enjoyed the film, believing it was 'excellent', and agreed to distribute it throughout its '10,000 or so' theatres across the country.[549] From here, the *Fun and Facts* team relied upon the favourable reaction of MGM towards all future films, eliminating the need for initial screen tests.

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[546] Daniel Goldmark and Charlie Keil, *Funny Pictures: Animation and Comedy in Studio Era-Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 117.
[547] Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p. 100.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Sloan to Benson, letter, 7 November 1947.

Although MGM enthusiastically accepted *Make Mine Freedom* into their distribution channels, all future *Fun and Facts* films were subjected to intense scrutiny to ensure they met the standards of the studio prior to release. Those that did not satisfy the company were discarded and sent to secondary distribution, as was the case for *Going Places*. Interestingly, *Going Places* was 'well-received' by the Sloan Foundation despite fears that it would be rejected by MGM.[550] According to Sutherland, the foundation's comments following a private screening of the film included: '1 – That the animation and production were superior to the first picture; 2 – That this picture is a much better educational picture than the first one; 3 – That the first picture contained more entertainment than the second.'[551] Whilst these comments show that the film met the requirements of the *Fun and Facts* team, the same could not be said for MGM.

The 1940s represented a watershed moment for the company, following the employment of Quimby in the late 1930s. After securing the services of animators such as Joseph Hanna, William Barbera, and Tex Avery, all of whom produced award winning comedic features for MGM, Quimby had raised the expectations of the company to a high standard.[552] Audiences expected to be entertained when viewing an MGM production, not educated. The company, therefore, rejected *Going Places* and 'indicated that they have no

[550] Sloan to Benson, letter, 29 June 1948, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[551] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 2 July 1948, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[552] Joseph Hanna, William Barbera, and Tex Avery were the most popular animators in MGM. Hanna and Barbera were of particular importance, producing the company's flagship series *Tom & Jerry*. More information on these animators can be found in, Gordon B. Arnold, *Animation and the American Imagination: A Brief History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2017), pp. 123 – 143.

objection to exhibiting films of this type provided there is sufficient entertainment value in them to warrant their being sold alongside regular entertainment films.' According to Zurcher, this 'entertainment value' had to do with the humour of the film.[553]

This setback did not deter MGM from distributing any future films, providing they met the entertainment standards of the company. Expectations amongst the *Fun and Facts* team were high after the production of *Meet King Joe* in 1948. In writing to Sutherland on 11 October, Benson shared his thoughts that '*Meet King Joe* is the best picture we have exhibited so far. I think it is better than the first one, *Make Mine Freedom*.'[554] Shortly after, MGM agreed to distribute the film in its theatres. Details of MGM's private screening of *Meet King Joe* are undocumented. However, the company did indicate their deep interest in encouraging more workers to see the moving picture after it exceeded expectations.[555] It is likely that the enthusiasm *Meet King Joe* generated amongst the executive committee at MGM secured the release of the series' upcoming cartoons, including *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans*, despite the heavy presence of propaganda. Unfortunately, MGM's response to these films, as well as the rest of the series, is unknown. As such, the decision to distribute the remainder of the *Fun and Facts* series is based on speculation from the positive reception of both *Make Mine Freedom* and *Meet King Joe*.

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[553] Zurcher to Sutherland, letter, 9 July 1948, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[554] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 11 October 1948, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[555] Benson to Sloan, letter, 7 July 1949, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.

Following the release of a *Fun and Facts* cartoon, MGM distributed comment cards to measure public opinion, much like Benson had done on a smaller scale before. These cards allowed viewers to provide detailed responses to the film without having to answer the 'yes or no' questions in the *Fun and Facts* forms. They did, however, remain anonymous and so these cards provide very little information on the type of audiences that witnessed these films. If any details were given, they contained only names or initials.

Fortunately, statistics on cinema attendance provided by Gallup offer an insight into the average American movie-goer of the 1940s. Reports found that the cinema was popular amongst the younger generation with a decline in attendance in those above the age of 19. Despite this, young adults still visited the cinema in large numbers with 57 per cent of the US population under 30 viewing at least one picture a week. In regards to class, traditionally lower and middle class Americans frequented movie theatres more than the upper class did, accounting for 83 per cent of ticket sales.[556] With this in mind, the *Fun and Facts* cartoons likely reached their target audiences through the cinema as Sloan and Benson aimed to disseminate their ideology to high school students and young workers. Furthermore, since MGM distributed comment cards to the general public, rather than hand-picked screen testers, the opinions of these viewers tended to be more direct and, in some cases, critical. As such, the comments provided by cinema attendees offer a more representative response to the *Fun and Facts* cartoons.

[556] Gallup Poll findings in, Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 75.

The response of cinema-goers to *Make Mine Freedom* continued the momentum from the initial screen tests and remained overwhelmingly positive. Viewers specifically referred to the use of animation, commenting 'This way this was presented, in cartoon form, will make a greater impression'; 'Swell. More of this in cartoon form'; and 'The cartoon idea puts the point over much better.'[557] Very few disagreed with the decision to use animation for the purpose of economic propaganda, suggesting that movie-goers were more receptive to animated shorts than those who participated in the screen tests – specifically in MGM theatres. Viewers also praised the ideological leanings of the film. MGM received an abundance of comments including: 'I considered the picture excellent in as much as it might help us all to ward off dissension in our present government' and 'Very fine. Should be shown behind the iron curtain.'[558] Theatre managers also raised this issue, claiming that *Make Mine Freedom* was 'a very good anti-Red short' and 'one of the finest pieces of propaganda to come out of Hollywood about our way of living.'[559] The fact that the film was blatant propaganda did not appear to deter these viewers who, perhaps due to the postwar climate, believed that more of the same was needed.

There were, however, more negative comments on the film in general compared to those received in the test screenings. For example, some viewers complained that *Make Mine Freedom* was 'Lousy', 'Hogwash', and

[557] Viewer comments for *Make Mine Freedom* (theatre), comments, undated, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers, pp. 3 – 4.
[558] Ibid, p. 5.
[559] 'Comments regarding *Make Mine Freedom* from MGM Theatre Managers', comments, undated, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers.

'Rather corny and insults the intelligence of the average theatre patron.'[560] As Avery produced many of MGM's adult cartoons that featured an abundance of mature humour, it was likely that the *Fun and Facts* series was overtly juvenile for some viewers. This, again, raises the issue of the importance of entertainment in theatrical animated shorts, particularly those aimed at adult audiences. As one patron commented, 'It is a shame that the theatres are becoming a method of propaganda instead of entertainment as they originally were designed to be.'[561] Evidently, audiences remained divided on the use of animation for serious subjects such as the economy. Educational pieces that contained little humour were more likely to be found in the classroom, not the movie theatre.

As was the case with the initial screen tests, viewer comments on the remainder of the series are undocumented. Again, the success of *Make Mine Freedom* may have made any future surveys unnecessary, though it is surprising that MGM did not gather data on additional films after the rejection of *Going Places*. The general release of the series, however, attracted attention from larger circles. Opinions were no longer restricted to the comment cards supplied to movie patrons after a showing, but could be found in advertisements, magazines, and national newspapers. The first of these appeared in an article published in the *Los Angeles Herald & Express* on 8 May 1948 regarding the release of *Make Mine Freedom*. The article itself was written by George E. Sokolsky, a right-wing radio broadcaster and long-standing supporter of the NAM. During his career, Sokolsky was involved in

[560] Viewer comments for *Make Mine Freedom* (theatre), p. 5.
[561] Ibid, p. 11.

an array of propaganda activities that included consultant services, the drafting of booklets or statements, radio broadcasts and transcriptions, and lecturers. For the NAM, he delivered a weekly commentary on current economic affairs, largely relating to the free enterprise system, that was distributed to 186 radio stations during the 1930s. His efforts greatly supported the NAM's anti-New Deal rhetoric and its vision of the 'American Way of Life'.[562] As such, Sokolsky offered nothing but praise for *Make Mine Freedom* in his 1948 article, arguing that it was 'humorous, colourful, bright, and yet explains why the United States is an excellent place to live – in fact a better place than those proletarian heavens that are so widely advertised by the seekers of utopias.' He continued, 'It is propaganda, sure! . . . but it is the sort of propaganda that parents should take their children to see, because our children need to know beyond doubt that just being an American is a blessing.'[563] Evidently, Sokolsky was the perfect anti-New Deal conservative to endorse *Make Mine Freedom*.

The popularity of *Make Mine Freedom* gained momentum throughout its first year of release. The *Motion Picture Herald* advertised the contract signed between Harding College and MGM during the same week the information was made available to the public. In their February edition, the magazine informed its readers of the release date, the timescale for secondary distribution, and the plans for further productions.[564] *Look Magazine* also

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[562] For more details on George E. Sokolsky and his association with the NAM, see Scott M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations, A History* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), p. 471. And Bird, *"Better Living*," p. 54.
[563] Anonymous, 'These Days: *Make Mine Freedom,' Los Angeles Herald & Express*, 8 May 1948, p. 3.
[564] Anonymous, 'MGM to Handle Short,' *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 February 1948, p. 46.

reported on the film, claiming it to be 'a witty and convincing attack on political "isms."'[565] Its founder, Gardner Cowles Jr., shared Benson's anti-Communist sentiments and served as a corporate member of both the Farfield Foundation and the Crusade for Freedom. The aims of these organisations mirrored those of the *Fun and Facts* series: to 'win the hearts and minds of Americans in the ideological struggle against Communism.'[566] Similarly, the *American Legion Magazine* claimed that *Make Mine Freedom* was 'about the serious world problems, Communism vs. Freedom.'[567] The popularity the film acquired within anti-Communist circles culminated in the Freedoms Foundation award that was presented to Benson at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in 1949. As a right-wing religious organisation, the Freedoms Foundation believed *Make Mine Freedom* delivered 'a better understanding of the American Way of Life.'[568] This award, alongside the positive press, proved to the *Fun and Facts* team that their first animated short was a success amongst viewers who shared their own political and economic beliefs.

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[565] Positive comments from viewers, NEP advertisement, undated, box B-061, folder: Make Mine Freedom, Benson Papers.

[566] For more information on the Crusade for Freedom see, Richard H. Cummings, *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": Rallying Americans Behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950 – 1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010). For the Farfield Foundation, see Frances Stoner Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999), pp. 125 – 127.

[567] Positive comments from viewers, NEP advertisement.

[568] An article on Harding's winning of the Freedoms Foundation award appeared in the Arkansas based newspaper, *The Daily Citizen*: Anonymous, 'Harding College honoured at Valley Forge,' *The Daily Citizen*, 26 November 1949, p. 1. In order to be considered for the award, recipients were judged against the Foundation's 'Credo' which included: the right to worship God in one's own way, right to free speech and press, the right to assemble, and the right to own private property, amongst others. Further information on the Freedoms Foundation and their ideology can be found in, Lorett Treese, *Valley Forge: Making and Remaking a National Symbol* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 164 – 165.

As the first cartoon in the series, *Make Mine Freedom* received plenty of praise from conservative circles. However, in 1949 the film began to be overshadowed by Harding's third, and most popular, production *Meet King Joe.* For its release, the *Fun and Facts* team capitalised on the success of *Make Mine Freedom* by hosting a premiere of the film in Searcy, Arkansas, before its debut in New York's Broadway district. William J. Fox of United Press covered the event for the Memphis newspaper, *The Commercial Appeal*, in his 1949 article 'Searcy Sees World Premiere of Film on US Way of Life.' According to Fox, 'celebrities and newsmen' were amongst the 6,000 attendees eager to be the first to see *Meet King Joe*. Celebrations followed the screening as Fox reported, 'the high school band played in the streets, the town square was dappled with fluttering flags, and a local "King Joe" was crowned.' For this, the town of Searcy 'did itself proud.'[569] The event was also covered in another Memphis-based newspaper, *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*. With growing popularity, the article claimed that Benson's 'fact-backed answers to the threats of Communism and other political and economic systems alien to our own will reach a greater audience than ever before.' On 28 May, *Meet King Joe* was released to national audiences, appearing in over 11,000 theatres in both the US and Canada. According to the article, the film offered viewers a production 'as full of laughs as any cartoon you ever cackled at' with 'thick cuts of cold fact.'[570] Such coverage provided the film and the college with the publicity that Benson had long hoped for.

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[569] Anonymous, 'Searcy Sees World Premiere of Film on US Way of Life,' *The Commercial Appeal*, undated in, Materials relating to *Meet King Joe*, box B-060, folder: Meet King Joe, Benson Papers.
[570] Anonymous, 'Benson Tells the World of His Belief in Free Enterprise with Film Cartoons,' *The Memphis Press- Scimitar*, 19 May 1949, p. 5.

On 7 July, Benson informed Zurcher of an MGM report that claimed *Meet King Joe* had garnered a much greater response than that of *Make Mine Freedom*.[571] Sloan was surprised to hear this, based on his previous assumption that the 'abstract problems' within the film would not be suited for theatrical distribution.[572] *Make Mine Freedom*, on the other hand, was a straightforward anti-Communist feature that viewers were more accustomed to seeing after the propaganda bombardment of the Second World War. *Business Week* argued that the success of *Meet King Joe* was due to the perfect balance of education and humour. In its 16 December 1950 article, the publication claimed 'The reason for this success is simple: The pictures are as entertaining as they are educational. Instead of a drum-beating approach to the American free-enterprise system, they take a light-hearted, good-humoured view.' 'The pictures are frankly propaganda', the article continued, 'Yet their detractors have been few.' This was certainly the case for both *Make Mine Freedom* and *Meet King Joe*. Positive comments were in abundance, yet negative press was scarce. *Business Week* argued that there were two main reasons for this, '1) The pictures deal with facts rather than with ideals; and (2) they frankly point out the imperfections in the system without trying to justify them. All parties involved feel that this kind of honesty is the only effective way to sell an idea.'[573] Benson's objection to removing scenes that did not conform to their ideals, for example that of government intervention in the case of monopolies (as seen in *Going Places*), was the right move.

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[571] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 7 July 1949.
[572] Sloan to Benson, letter, 13 July 1949, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[573] Anonymous, 'Even Economics Can Be Fun,' *Business Week*, 16 December 1950, pp. 41 – 42.

Though there is no evidence to suggest this, it is possible that both *Make Mine Freedom* and *Meet King Joe* avoided criticism due to the inclusion of scenes that highlighted the negative aspects of the free enterprise system.

The absence of negative press concerning these two theatrical features is unusual. The *Fun and Facts* team routinely gathered comments, advertisements, and articles featuring their productions, yet there is no evidence of public criticism of *Make Mine Freedom* or *Meet King Joe*. There was, however, growing disapproval with future releases. For example, Harding's third theatrical release, *Why Play Leap Frog?*, was met with mixed reactions. Like the first two pictures, *Why Play Leap Frog?* was widely accepted by those who shared the team's ideological commitments. In 1949, Benson showcased the existing films at Harding's Freedom Forum to an audience of '11 men from 21 different states and representing about 50 different businesses.'[574] According to L. Edward Hicks, the Freedom Forums were open to a cross-section of American society; but, from the outset, they were aimed at, and attended primarily by, middle-management executives who came as guests of Harding.[575] Unsurprisingly, these guests were representatives of some of America's largest conservative industries, including Republic Steel and General Electric, and so they were 'very much delighted with the pictures.'[576] In the postwar period, the *Fun and Facts* series was an

[574] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 10 March 1949, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[575] L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), p. 54.
[576] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 10 March 1949.

ideal programme for managers to show to their workers, especially as they took on the new role of economic education.[577]

Why Play Leapfrog? also appealed to theatre patrons as shown by surveys conducted by the Psychological Corporation's Marketing and Social Research Division. Hired by John Sutherland Productions, the Psychological Corporation was a company that 'rented out' academics to solve problems relating to industry, largely by conducting personal tests. In 1930, Yale psychologist Henry C. Link developed the Marketing and Social Research Division to assess public views of corporate clients such as major US steel companies, General Electric, Ford, Standard Oil, and AT&T. Whilst these tests appear to be unbiased in their execution, the aim of Link's work was to monitor public opinion and determine the effectiveness of corporate propaganda, advising on which tactics to adopt.[578] His involvement in the *Fun and Facts* project was minor, with the corporation conducting only one survey. Nevertheless, the involvement of an academic with psychological credentials offers the report a large degree of credibility. In April 1950, he initiated interviews with 200 men and women in the Strand Theatre in Reading, Pennsylvania, following a screening of *Why Play Leap Frog?* This study was

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[577] Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, p. 1.

[578] In 1947, Link reported that a series of large-scale experiments in the 'Techniques of Communicating Ideas' (1945) was sponsored by ten of the nation's leading companies. These experiments found that the best way to sell the conservative vision of free enterprise was not on its own values and characteristics as such, but by identifying these with Americanism, then linking New Deal policies to un-Americanism. This may explain why pro-free enterprise propaganda had these characteristics during the postwar period. They were certainly used effectively by the *Fun and Facts* team. More information on Henry Link, the Psychological Corporation, and their clients can be found in, Amy Fried, *A Crisis in Public Opinion Polling: Crisis Cooperation, and the Making of Public Opinion Professions* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 27. And Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy: Corporate Propaganda versus Freedom and Liberty* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 138.

somewhat different from those usually conducted by the Marketing and Social Research Division in that Sutherland developed the questions, not the corporation. As was the case with MGM's testing, the majority of those questioned stated that they would like to see more of the same (87 percent). Only 16 percent found the film unfavourable.[579] Overall, *Why Play Leap Frog?* received the same kind of audience reaction that Harding's past films, *Make Mine Freedom* and *Meet King Joe*, did.

However, criticisms began to arise shortly after its release . On 29 April 1950, a letter to the editor was posted in the *Motion Picture Herald*, criticising *Why Play Leap Frog?* Titled 'No Propaganda', this complaint accused the film of presenting untruthful facts regarding the breakdown of automobile costs. 'It made me plenty mad', the writer claimed, 'to see that there was no reference whatsoever to taxes. Anyone who has ever heard of our $42,000,000,000 budget knows that taxes, not labour, are the controlling factor in the price of everything we buy, including admission tickets.' Seeing *Why Play Leap Frog?* as anti-labour propaganda, this theatre patron argued that MGM should 'stick to entertainment and leave the propaganda to more selfish interests.'[580] MGM's Fred Quimby was made aware of this article two months after its release and immediately informed Benson of its existence. Quimby argued that it was 'something that I do not think should go unanswered' and asked Benson to provide the statistics used in the film to enable him to provide a

[579] 'Audience Reaction to *Why Play Leap Frog?',* A Report Conducted for John Sutherland Productions, Inc. by The Marketing and Social Research Division of The Psychological Corporation, 28 – 29 April 1950.
[580] Letters to the Editor, 'No Propaganda,' *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 April 1950, p. 3.

response to the article.[581] Benson obliged, sending Quimby a letter provided by his researcher at Harding College. In this, Bud Green defended the film, arguing that 'A mention of taxes was obviously withheld because it would have confused the lesson of the film which was the inseparable relationship between wages and prices.' He then claimed that although the statistics provided for the breakdown of the cost of an automobile were not 'strictly correct', having been miscalculated by about $60, the author's arguments were without merit. For example, the author argued that 'the picture tries to show that in the case of a $1,500 automobile, 85 percent of the cost was in labour.' That statistic quoted in the film was in fact 80 per cent, not 85. As such, both Benson and Green were reluctant to take the complaint seriously as the viewer 'misunderstood' the film.[582] Upon receiving this letter, Quimby decided not to respond to the article. This was the right decision according to Benson, who argued that 'We have men who naturally are set upon creating friction between employers and employees . . . That is one of the reasons we have built this series of pictures to help create a better understanding of the facts in order that there might be a greater degree of good will existing between employers and employees.' The critics would continue to find fault, Benson wrote, but the series was receiving positive reactions from the right people that outweighed the negative reviews.[583]

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[581] Quimby to Benson, letter, 8 June 1950, box B-061, folder: Why Play Leap Frog?, Benson Papers.
[582] Bud Green to Benson, letter, 20 June 1950, box B-061, folder: Why Play Leap Frog?, Benson Papers.
[583] Benson to Quimby, letter, 28 June 1950, box B-061, folder: Why Play Leap Frog?, Benson Papers.

From here, the momentum that began with the release of *Make Mine Freedom*, and intensified following screenings of *Meet King Joe*, began to wane. Viewer reception for *Albert in Blunderland*, the fourth film to be released through primary distribution, is undocumented. It cannot be found within the Benson Papers and advertisements within local and national newspapers are scarce; almost non-existent. This is surprising given that *Albert in Blunderland* was the series' most anti-Communist feature and open to criticism from the left. It was not until the release of *Fresh Laid Plans*, and the aforementioned controversy surrounding the film, that public opinion resurfaced. The negative press the film produced, however, provided national advertising. On 13 April 1951, the International Baby Chick Association contacted Benson after reading the article published in the *New York Times*. Rather than provide further criticism, the association requested a copy of the film to show to the 6,000 commercial poultry hatchery-men and breeders that would be attending an annual convention. The executive secretary, Don Turnbull, believed its members would thoroughly enjoy the film after going on record in 'opposition to government price supports for poultry and eggs.'[584] Benson used this request to argue that the negative press in the *New York Times* was valuable, rather than harmful, however it did not refuel the momentum needed to carry the rest of the series.

In the following year, the popularity of the *Fun and Facts* series had declined rapidly. Primary distribution channels featured it far less. The situation was so bleak that Sutherland suggested the termination of work on

[584] Don Turnbull to Benson, letter, 13 April 1951, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1951, Benson Papers.

the storyboards for a further two films, tentatively titled 'Leadership' and 'Competition'. This came after the news that MGM had rejected the release of a further two films, *The Devil and John Q* and *Dear Uncle*. To remedy the situation, Sutherland argued that it would be best if two new films were created along the lines of *Meet King Joe* – the series most successful, and its last popular, production.[585] Benson agreed, believing that the first four pictures 'had a considerable educational value which in my opinion was not characteristic of the latter ones. While *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans* were accepted for theatrical distribution, it was my opinion they were chiefly riding on the coat tails of the earlier pictures.' To be successful, the *Fun and Facts* team had to return to the roots of the series. Benson had been arguing for the past two years that the series needed to make a stronger effort to incorporate educational themes into the cartoons. If this was not achieved, he was unwilling to continue to have the series made under the name of Harding College. He also argued that if more robust educational content was inserted into the series, MGM would be more likely to accept future films.[586] This was a risky plan, however, given that MGM rejected *Going Places* on the grounds that studio critics deemed it too educational. Correspondence relating to the developments of this issue are scarce, though the conclusion speaks volumes. A contract signed between Harding and MGM shows that the series' future film, *Inside Cackle Corners*, was accepted for theatrical distribution yet there is little information regarding its release, reception, and

[585] Sutherland to Benson, letter, 6 June 1952, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1950, Benson Papers.
[586] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 12 June 1952, box B-057, folder: John Sutherland correspondence 1950, Benson Papers.

advertisements. It appears that after the disappointing reception of *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans*, and the consequent rejection of *The Devil and John* Q and *Dear Uncle*, the series was unable to regain momentum. *Meet King Joe* represented the peak of the popularity and influence of the series and in the years following its release, the Harding cartoons slowly disappeared from national theatres.

Secondary Distribution Channels

A similar pattern also occurred in secondary distribution channels. From the outset, Benson was keen to capitalise on the growing popularity of educational films in the classroom. In 1947, he enlisted the help of Carl Nater, an ex-Disney employee who left the studio to aid Benson in the secondary distribution of the *Fun and Facts* series.[587] On Nater's recommendation, the distribution house was created within the NEP, rather than through an external company. In a letter to Zurcher on 23 May 1947, Benson argued 'These special educational films which we are making are calculated for a very special purpose. Into them has gone a lot of careful thought, and a lot of careful work . . . This we believe merits special distribution methods.'[588] The decision to distribute the films through Harding College resulted in a wealth of information being stored in the Benson Papers. However, the sources here are somewhat repetitive, painting a similar picture to what had occurred with the series through primary distribution. At first, the *Fun and Facts* team was

[587] Jimmy Johnson, *Inside the Whimsy Works: My Life with Walt Disney Productions* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2014), p. 25.
[588] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 23 May 1947, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1947, Benson Papers.

optimistic, if a little impatient. As stated in the contract with MGM, a film was to be in primary distribution for at least two years before being released back to Harding. Therefore, when *Going Places* was rejected, Benson eagerly advertised the film through educational channels where he believed it would be widely received. 'This picture' he argued, 'is far above the average picture being used in the educational field and that accordingly, we could obtain for it good distribution in educational channels.'[589]

In the immediate aftermath of the film's release, the *Fun and Facts* team received an abundance of correspondence from third parties interested in *Going Places*. In January 1949, Sutherland showcased the film to Alfred Rosenberg, manager of the Text Film Department at McGraw-Hill Book Company.[590] Rosenberg was highly impressed and showed an interest in working with Harding on the distribution of *Going Places* and all future films. According to Sutherland, McGraw-Hill spent a good deal of money in advertising and promoting the pictures they distribute, making it a perfect opportunity for the *Fun and Facts* series. The film also received interest from the Modern Talking Picture Service. Like McGraw-Hill, the company reached out to the team and offered their support in distributing *Going Places* through educational channels. Benson was delighted by these offers, writing to the Sloan Foundation that Harding had 'no objection' in accepting the services of

[589] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 16 July 1948, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1948, Benson Papers.
[590] The McGraw-Hill Book Company was a leading organisation in the publication of educational materials. More information on the company and the type of films they released can be found in: Geoff Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010), pp. 109 – 110.

any professional distributions. After all, his objective was to achieve 'the widest possible distribution of these films.'[591]

Interestingly, the Sloan Foundation shelved these offers from McGraw-Hill and the Modern Talking Picture Service, which had full authority over the series. Nevertheless, the interest *Going Places* had received in its early stages was a good indication of the success of the film. On 14 April 1949, Benson informed Zurcher of the progress of the film stating, 'the demand for the 200 prints we now have of *Going Places* is so great that any requests now have to be held up at least 30 days before they can be fulfilled. This means that we are getting the maximum circulation from these 200 prints.' [592] Unfortunately, individual comments on *Going Places* are scare; though those that do exist are overwhelmingly positive. Unnamed industrial firms in Chicago and Cleveland praised the film, saying 'This is just what we have been looking for, how can we get a print?' and 'A remarkably fine job. This will do a lot in improving the understanding of our American Way of Life.'[593] Additionally, F. V. Roberts, manager of the Industrial Relations Department at the Ford Motor Company, claimed *Going Places* was 'Truly an effective short course in the economics of our life.'[594] It is important to note, however, that such comments were provided by audiences who were likely to share the ideological leanings of the *Fun and Facts* team and offer praise to the picture. The lack of criticism from more liberal industrialists is striking.

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[591] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 31 January 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[592] Benson to Sloan, letter, 14 April 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[593] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 22 January 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[594] Positive comments from viewers, NEP advertisement, undated.

There was also a lack of individual comments within educational circles. This is surprising given that high school students were the target audience for the *Fun and Facts* cartoons in secondary distribution channels. Nevertheless, those who viewed the film provided positive feedback that surpassed that of *Make Mine Freedom*. According to Benson, students seemed to understand *Going Places* more readily and raised numerous questions after the showing.[595] The team considered this a huge success. They hoped it would provoke classroom discussion on issues regarding the free enterprise system. Zurcher was particularly impressed and hoped to achieve the same results with *Make Mine Freedom* following its contractual release from MGM. After the unpredictable success of *Going Places*, the Sloan Foundation was more receptive to the idea of secondary distribution.[596]

The changing attitudes of the foundation culminated in a distribution agreement between the *Fun and Facts* project and the Modern Talking Picture Service. In the postwar era, observers regarded this organisation as a specialist in business-subsidised distribution with an audience base that consisted of 53,000 schools, 36,000 churches, and 26,000 clubs and youth groups. Clients of theirs included familiar industrial giants such as Ford and the DuPont Company, making it an ideal distributor for the *Fun and Facts* series.[597] In a joint report on the progress of the first two cartoons, Harding and the Modern Talking Picture Service found that *Make Mine Freedom* had

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[595] Benson to Zurcher, letter, 22 January 1949.

[596] The Sloan Foundation previously fought hard against secondary distribution, refusing to commit to its funding. This appeared to have changed following the success of *Going Places*. More on the tension between these two channels can be found in chapter three.

[597] Peter Lev (ed.), *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950 – 1959* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 259.

been shown to a total audience of 522,964 people whilst *Going Places* reached 692,716. From these figures, there was a breakdown of school and industrial audiences. For the first picture, 51 percent of the audience was made up of students whilst 49 percent were industrialists. For the second, this was 45 and 55 percent.[598] Evidently, the *Fun and Facts* cartoons were reaching the desired audiences.

Although comments on the project's first four films are scarce, correspondence between the *Fun and Facts* team provide evidence of their overall success. As was the case in theatrical distribution, these films received a positive response from both industrial and educational circles. Fortunes changed, however, with the release of the series' two most controversial films, *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans*. Whilst Benson believed that the *New York Times* critique of *Fresh Laid Plans* garnered useful attention amongst anti-New Deal industrialists, the piece was harmful to potential educational audiences. The article in the *Educational Screen* was influenced by the *New York Times* piece and garnered interest amongst the nation's educators.[599] In the following issue, readers responded to the editorial, 'Educators, Be Wary!', with comments in support of the publication. A Professor of Education at Wayne University, Detroit, offered his congratulations to the author, as did an Assistant Professor of Education at New York University adding, 'Your editorial was timely and one that focuses

[598] 'Harding College Motion Picture Division Distribution Report,' report, undated, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1950, Benson Papers.
[599] These articles were discussed in chapter four and can be found in, Thomas F. Brady, 'Cartoon Film Stirs Dispute in West by Satirizing Farm Planning,' *New York Times*, 18 March 1951 and 'Educators, Be Wary!,' *Educational Screen* 30:5 (1951), p. 172.

on a matter in need of clarification if films and all other visual materials are to be used intelligently in our schools.' Another reader, who appeared not to be an educator, stated how he had 'been increasingly disturbed by the "enlightenment" coming from that institution [Harding]. The efforts of the school, which may be sincere, nevertheless can do infinite harm to the progress of visual education.'[600] In a letter to Sutherland on 20 August 1951, Benson wrote that the opposition to *Fresh Laid Plans* from those in visual education was 'pretty severe.'[601] He then tried to defend the film in a letter to the editor of *Educational Screen* that was published in its September edition. In this, Benson argued that the sponsorship behind the series was neither secret nor sinister and that the film was not available to viewers 'free for nothing.' He also made an effort to explain how *Fresh Laid Plans* represented what Harding believed to be 'sound economic education.'[602] Unfortunately for the *Fun and Facts* team, the damage was already done. As Benson had predicted to Sutherland, 'we may find 16mm distribution of these [prints] quite limited and we may find it almost nil in the field of education.'[603] Although attitudes towards educational films had improved since the 1930s, many educators remained wary of corporate sponsored productions that appeared to have ulterior motives.

The decline of the *Fun and Facts* series in both primary and secondary distribution channels encouraged the team to explore new ways of

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[600] Anonymous, 'On Being Wary', *Educational Screen* 30:5 (1951), p. 208.
[601] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 20 August 1951, box B-057, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1950, Benson Papers.
[602] George S. Benson, 'President's Comment,' *Educational Screen* 30:5 (1951), pp. 258 – 260.
[603] Benson to Sutherland, letter, 20 August 1951.

broadcasting the cartoons. As a new and rapidly growing medium, television was the next logical step. In 1950, almost four million American households owned a television. This figure increased by an average of five million each year until 1955, when just over thirty million households possessed a television set.[604] Even if the *Fun and Facts* series managed to uphold the theatrical momentum behind the release of *Meet King Joe*, it would have later been jeopardised by the decline of ticket sales as a direct response to the growth of home-based media.[605] Sensing the danger, film studios, advertising companies, and public relations firms began to move into this new market with haste. As Anna McCarthy explains, television in the postwar period was a perfect instrument to 'spread morality, education, and happiness' as it was readily available to millions of viewers in the comfort of their own home. Influenced by fears of Communism, the nation's industrialists and educators (i.e. Sloan, Benson, and their associates) utilised television broadcasting to disseminate their own brand of Americanism; freedom in the form of the free enterprise system.[606] Sloan had already considered the use of television when in 1949, he showcased the first three films to the president of the American Broadcasting Company. Although it was too early for the *Fun and*

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[604] 'Number of TV Households in America,' *The Buffalo History Museum* [http://www.buffalohistory.org/Explore/Exhibits/virtual_exhibits/wheels_of_power/educ_materials/television_handout.pdf], accessed 2 April 2018.
[605] Lev (ed.), *The Fifties*, p. 7. For further work on the growth and influence of American television during the 1950s see, Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* (New York: New York University Press), Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), Martin Halliwell, *American Culture in the 1950s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), Alison Hulme (ed.), *Consumerism on TV: Popular Media from the 1950s to the Present* (London: Ashgate, 2015), Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), and David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett, 1994).
[606] McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine*, pp. 1 – 2.

Facts cartoons to enter secondary distribution (two of them being under contract with MGM), Sloan believed that 'television will ultimately offer a tremendous field for exploitation of a film of ideas of this kind.'[607] It was best, he thought, to think about the process sooner rather than later.

However, the widespread television broadcasting that Sloan, and later Benson, had hoped for never came to fruition. During the decade of the 1950s, only one *Fun and Facts* cartoon made it to the small screen. A report by Harding notes that during the months of July and August 1951, *Going* Places experienced a trial in television broadcasting. This document states:

> During this period 63 stations or well over half of the national 107 TV stations throughout the country televised it on a sustaining basis. Statistics reported by the stations themselves indicated that a total of 6,770,370 people viewed the film during 63 television screenings. Virtually every major city in the United States was covered.[608]

These were impressive statistics for an economic educational cartoon and both Sloan and Benson were pleased with the outcome of the experiment. However, further tests were not conducted and *Going Places* remained the only cartoon in the series to be televised. The findings here coincide with existing research by Hicks who, when analysing the success of the series, could only name *Going Places* as a televised production.[609] There is the possibility that the series did not translate well to the black and white television sets of the era, where the impressive use of Technicolour could not be appreciated by audiences at home. Benson may have made further attempts

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[607] Sloan to Benson, letter, 18 April 1949, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1949, Benson Papers.
[608] 'Annual Report: Harding College Motion Picture Division,' 1 January – 31 December 1951, report, box B-058, folder: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation correspondence 1952, Benson Papers, p. 2.
[609] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. 64.

in the following decade as advances in colour technology were introduced, however sources to support this are difficult to locate. The cartoons were not widely advertised and letters that could suggest the creation of broadcasting contracts are non-existent. As such, it is likely that *Fun and Fact's* venture into the realm of television was nothing more than a fleeting experiment despite its initial success.

Whilst the mixed responses on individual cartoons are significant in determining the project's success, it is also important to note the comments made about the series as a whole. According to Quimby, the 'Harding cartoons became the most popular short subjects ever distributed by MGM. Never in the history of MGM's shorts department have so many letters been directed to my desk praising an effort.' Every exhibitor, he stressed, 'begged for more of their type . . . promising not only more playing time but more important billing.'[610] Quimby's remarks, however, do not represent the thoughts of all who viewed the series. The reaction to the overall content of *Fun and Facts* was not as overwhelmingly positive as the direct comments made about individual cartoons. For example, in 1961 *Newsweek* claimed that 'What M.I.T. is to engineering and Harvard is to Law, Harding is to the far right . . . the academic capital of ultra-conservatism.'[611] Similarly, the *New York Times* labelled Harding as 'perhaps the most prolific centre of aggressive anti-Communist propaganda in the United States.'[612]

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[610] 'Even Economics Can Be Fun,' *Business Week*, pp. 41 – 42.
[611] Anonymous, 'Thunder on the Far Right,' *Newsweek*, 12 April 1961, pp. 18-20.
[612] Cabell Phillips, 'Wide Anti-Red Drive Directed From Small Town in Arkansas,' *New York Times*, 18 May 1961, p. 26.

Organisations such as the Anti-Defamation League were also keen to criticise Harding. In 1964, the ADL completed a study of the major financial supporters of right-wing propaganda in which it attacked the Sloan Foundation for aiding in 'the extremist assaults on American democratic processes' by providing grants to the NEP. Harding, according to the ADL, was 'the largest producer of radical Right propaganda in the country.'[613] What is interesting about these comments, apart from their non-corporate conservative origin, is the timing. Both the *Newsweek* and *New York Times* article were published in 1961, whilst the ADL report was released in 1964. By the 1960s, the nation-wide hysteria surrounding the Red Scare and McCarthyism had largely subsided, with the exception of groups like the John Birch Society. As such, anti-Communist propaganda was subjected to greater scrutiny and increasing opposition. It is likely, therefore, that the *Fun and Facts* series was a product of its time and that after the early 1950s, there was no longer a large market for Benson's brand of free market Americanism in the form of animated propaganda.

Nevertheless, the overall response to the *Fun and Facts* series was positive. In both primary and secondary distribution channels, the first four cartoons were widely received and generated a wealth of praise in the form of viewer comments and screening requests. Unfortunately, the anonymity of theatre comment cards prevents an in-depth analysis of those who viewed the cartoons on the big screen, though the response was overwhelmingly optimistic. Of course, there were numerous negative remarks, but these were

[613] Waldemar A. Nielson, *Golden Donors: A New Anatomy of the Great Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 326 – 327.

few and far between. Outside of the theatre, the series was incredibly popular with like-minded businessmen who were eager to screen the film for their employees. In these areas, the *Fun and Facts* cartoons mirrored the public relations films that others, such as the Iron and Steel Institute and General Foods, were attempting to produce. These companies were often under the umbrella of the NAM, an organisation close to Sloan and General Motors, who shared the political and economic ideology of the *Fun and Facts* team. From the start of the project, these viewers were a target audience and vital to the success of the series.

The project did start to dwindle, however, following the release of the series' flagship cartoon *Meet King Joe*. As the third film in the series, *Meet King Joe* found the perfect balance of education and humour to satisfy audiences in primary and secondary distribution channels. However, whilst the team had created a formula that worked, it was not transferred to future productions. With the release of *Albert in Blunderland* and *Fresh Laid Plans*, the *Fun and Facts* series showcased films that contained greater political and educational themes that put off viewers and initiated controversy. With the absence of humour, MGM rejected the remainder of the series and the films began to falter in educational circles. Sadly, for Sloan, Benson, and Sutherland, the *Fun and Facts* cartoons appeared to be a product best suited for the anti-Communist tensions of the early 1950s. Here, their cartoons flourished but with political and social change, the series lost its standing with national audiences. It would always remain popular, however, with corporate conservatives such as themselves.

Conclusion

By 1980, George Benson's brand of conservatism – which fused hyper patriotism, free market ideology, and evangelicalism – was deeply imbedded in the political campaigns of Republican nominees fighting for the presidency. In his research on the National Educational Program, L. Edward Hicks argues that Benson utilised a variety of educational tools in a successful attempt to influence the changing political landscape of the post-WII era. His critical, in-depth study of Benson claims that 'an internally consistent conservative social, political, and economic philosophy,' as demonstrated through the *Fun and Facts* series, resonated with the New Christian Right and helped to propel Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980.[614] In an interview with Hicks, Benson himself casually remarked that he had performed a significant role in laying the groundwork for a conservative mentality and political activism central to the 1980 election campaign.[615] Indeed, from 1936 to 1980, Benson had promoted the political principles crucial to Reagan's success: a conservative, limited government as prescribed in the Constitution, belief in God, and the necessity of the free enterprise system.

Of course, much of the latter half of the twentieth century is beyond the scope of this thesis and warrants further study into Benson's postwar activities. As such, mention of the 1980 election may seem out of place in these concluding remarks, however, Hicks' bold claims of Benson's political

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[614] L. Edward Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt': George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), p. xviii. See also, John C. Stevens, *Before Any Were Willing: The Story of George S. Benson* (Searcy, AR: Harding University Press, 1991).

[615] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in Doubt,'* p. xviii.

significance raises a critical issue concerning the conclusions of existing historiography. The published works of Hicks and Stevens stress the long-lasting powerful impact of Benson's activities; from his missionary efforts in 1920s China to his political activism up to his passing in 1991. Hicks even praises the *Fun and Facts* series as a success, though restricts his research to the confines of the reception of the first three cartoons. Benson's efforts, they argue, contributed significantly to the major realignment in American politics that allowed a conservative-dominated Republican Party to gain political control in 1980.[616] Here, the focus is largely placed on the seemingly close relationship between Benson and Reagan. After shifting politically to the right during the 1950s, Reagan espoused the same ideology promoted by Harding's NEP. Patriotism, free enterprise economics, and fervent anti-Communism lay firmly at the core of his public activities, making him a desirable ally for Benson.[617] In 1962, Reagan collaborated with Benson for Harding's anti-Communist film project titled *The Truth about Communism*.

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[616] On the rise of the Republican Party and the 1980 election, see Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), James T. Patterson, *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To The Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), and Jeffrey D. Howison, *The 1980 Presidential Election: Ronald Reagan and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[617] The is a wealth of historiography concerning Reagan's ideology. For general, bibliographical works, see Craig Shirley, *Reagan's Revolution: The Untold Story of the Campaign that Started it All* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), Andrew E. Busch, *Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2001), and Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the* 1980s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For Reagan's anti-Communism, see Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006). For his involvement in American industry and pro-business ideology, see Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Reagan, who narrated the film, argued that it was a factual documentary in which most scenes 'were photographed by Communist cameramen as the actual events were taking place . . . The words of the Communist leaders are their own.'[618] The aim of the film was to provide viewers with a 'real', albeit biased, account of the realities of a Communist 'tyranny.'[619]

Bound by a desire to protect the freedoms of the United States from the perils of Communism, Benson and Reagan appeared to remain close over the coming decades. In 1978, Reagan congratulated Benson on his service to the nation through a telephone message made for the latter's eightieth birthday, reminding him of 'all that he has meant to our land.' He made sure to point out how Benson had spent over forty years campaigning for many of the same issues Reagan was now promoting in the upcoming campaign. 'I have been out on the mashed-potato circuit now for a great many years talking about the evils of big government, the conspiracy against this freedom of ours, both from within and without,' Reagan claimed. He 'couldn't possibly count' how many times he had quoted Benson in his own speeches.[620] As such, it is important not to dismiss both Hicks' and Steven's positive accounts of Benson's legacy given his evident impact on conservative politics. It is necessary, however, to note that the existing histography places too much emphasis on the role of Benson's brand of Americanism on the 1980 election and fails to provide any substantial conclusions on the struggles of his crusade and the level of

[618] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in* Doubt,' p. 78.
[619] 'The Truth About Communism,' *YouTube* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c_PsUR1wvA], accessed 21 October 2018.
[620] Hicks, *'Sometimes in the Wrong, But Never in* Doubt,' p. 114.

success of the *Fun and Facts* series. Ultimately, these works have greatly exaggerated his long-term, nation-wide influence.

Recently, these narratives have been challenged by a new generation of scholars. This thesis, together with that of Robbie Maxwell's, offers a new insight into the life of Benson and the power of the NEP from a different, more detached, perspective. Maxwell, for instance, found that Benson's activities during the 1960s were subjected to unprecedented scrutiny with much of it unflattering.[621] After the decline of the *Fun and Facts* series, Benson was persistently identified as a ringleader in the 'Radical Right' and associated with extreme right-wing organisations such as the John Birch Society (JBS) and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade (CACC). Historians of modern American conservatism have demonstrated a keen interest in these groups, yet have, at best, fleetingly touched upon Benson's contributions.[622] The 1960s American press, however, regularly highlighted his involvement. In 1961, *Time* listed the NEP alongside the JBS, the CACC, and the Christian

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[621] Robbie Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation: George S. Benson and Modern American Conservatism' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015), p. 229. Also, see Robbie Maxwell, '"A Shooting Star of Conservatism": George S. Benson, the National Education Program, and the "Radical Right,"' *Journal of American Studies* (2017), pp. 1 – 29.

[622] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Samuel Brenner, 'Fellow Travelers: Overlap between 'Mainstream' and 'Extremist' Conservatives in the Early 1960s,' in T*he Right Side of the Sixties: Re-examining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation*, eds. Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 83 – 99, and Donald Janson and Bernard Eismann, *The Far Right* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1963). For the John Birch Society, see D. J. Mulloy, *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy, Conservatism, and the Cold War* (Nashville, TN, Vanderbilt University Press, 2014) and Eckard V. Troy Jr., 'The Right Side of the 1960s: The Origins of the John Birch Society in the Pacific Northwest,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 105: 2 (2004), pp. 260 – 283. For the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, see Hubert Villeneuve, 'Teaching Anticommunism: Fred C. Schwarz, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and American Postwar Conservatism' (PhD diss., McGill University 2012).

Crusade as 'a few of the manifestations of a US phenomenon: the resurgence of ultra-conservative anti-Communism.' The NEP alone, the article claimed, had influenced twenty-five million people annually with the ultra-conservative literature highly 'favoured by the far-rightists in their forums.'[623] Those associated with Harding faced public criticism, similar to the attacks on the Sloan Foundation by the ADL. The 1964 Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater was a particular target. Throughout his campaign, Goldwater received widespread support from the 'Radical Right', including Benson who openly endorsed his nomination in a summer edition of 'Looking Ahead'. Goldwater supporters were increasingly powerful, Benson argued, because

> their man had expressed a positive political philosophy. It was his detractors who had labelled as extremist one who champions the rights of the individual, who would curtail expanding power in the central government, who would prefer a free enterprise economy than socialist experiments, and who would endeavour to slow the march of Communism.[624]

Unfortunately for Goldwater, such endorsements only served to damage his reputation. His links to the 'Radical Right' were not the primary explanation for his heavy defeat, though moderate conservatives within the Republican Party were keen to suggest that this was the case.

Benson's affiliation with extremism damaged his relations with the business community and prevented the creation of new evangelical/alliances with up-and-coming businessmen. Consequently, Benson relied heavily on his existing donors, the remaining old guard of radical anti-New Dealers. This presented a glaring issue as the generation of industrialists who had occupied

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[623] Anonymous, 'Organisations: The Ultras,' *Time*, 8 December 1961, pp. 22 – 24.
[624] George S. Benson, 'Looking Ahead', *Malakoff News*, 24 July 1964, p. 2.

the front lines in the fight against the New Deal was diminishing. Irénée du Pont and Charles Hook both died in 1963, whilst Sloan passed away in 1966.[625] The Sloan Foundation continued to support organisations dedicated to promulgating the importance of private enterprise, though no additional funds to Harding can be located beyond the *Fun and Facts* project. Additionally, Charles White retired as chairman of Republic Steel in 1960, halting donations to Benson, and Republic Steel gave nothing to the NEP after 1965. By 1968, Benson announced that the nation's largest steel and oil companies, who often provided the largest sums, had almost entirely withdrawn their funding. Gulf Oil, for example, had donated $10,000 a year for 15 years up to 1965; in 1966 it provided a final figure of $5,000.[626] The decline of Benson's relations with leading industrial conservatives, together with the end of his corporate-evangelical alliance with Sloan, also robbed him of the non-monetary benefits these relationships provided, including outlets for NEP materials and access to a broad range of networks.

These problems coincided with a decline in the NEP's overall activities. By 1968, the circulation of 'Looking Ahead' had fallen to just over 1,000, its lowest level since the early 1940s. Likewise, 'Listen Americans!' and the NEP's Monthly Letter suffered a similar reduction in scale.[627] Harding College

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[625] Unlike Benson, Sloan did not suffer from a damaging reputational decline in the aftermath of the *Fun and Facts* series. Sloan did not live to see much of the latter half of the twentieth century, passing away at the age of 90 in 1966. In his final years, he worked on a manuscript detailing his management of GM that was published in 1964. *My Life with General Motors* is still in print today, with a testimonial from Microsoft CEO Bill Gates on the cover. This industrial memoir, together with Sloan's greatest legacies of GM and the Sloan Foundation, has guaranteed him a place in America's corporate history.

[626] Benson to Ganus, letter, 17 September 1968, box G-185, folder: National Education Program – Benson, Dr. George – 1968, Clifton L. Ganus Jr. Papers, Ann Cowan Dixon Archives & Special Collections, Brackett Library Harding University.

[627] Ibid.

continued to host the Freedom Forums on an annual basis, however, its appeal could not rival that of its pre-1960s popularity. Though still alive, the activities of the NEP continued at a significantly reduced rate until Benson's death in 1991. As a result, his influence in politics began to wane. The overarching reality was that Benson's career diminished just as many of his political principles gained traction during the resurgence of twentieth-century American conservatism.

Notably, the decline in Benson's relationship with business was not part of a broader decline in business engagement with politics. As Maxwell explains, the 'newer and younger management,' whose ambivalence towards the NEP Benson lamented, were spending their time and money on more sophisticated projects.[628] The growth of think tanks, lobbying organisations, and Political Action Committees established organisational frameworks and created an intellectual edge to conservative ideas that the NEP could not compete against. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Heritage Foundation, for example, were 'business-friendly' conservative think tanks that actively sought the financial backing of America's elite corporate class. In 1971, the president of the AEI, William J. Baroody Sr., spoke before a group of corporate leaders, arguing that there now existed 'a monopoly hostile to business.' His rhetoric was similar to that of Benson, in which he encouraged big business to fight for the 'basic values of this free society and its free principles.'[629] Benson's reputation as a leader of the radical right, however,

[628] Robbie Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation,' p. 262.
[629] Jason Stahl, *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture Since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 1 – 2.

deterred the new generation of corporation conservatives from backing the NEP over the likes of Baroody and the AEI. They preferred to financially support those from a seemingly intellectual standpoint, rather than an alleged radical who continued to espouse outdated anti-Communist arguments.

Nevertheless, Benson did briefly resurface as a notable figure during the 1980 Presidential election, as documented in the works of Hicks and Stevens. His resurgence coincides with the wider context of the rise, fall, and then revival of free market ideals throughout the twentieth century. When Reagan, a former ally and supporter of Benson's brand of Americanism, stood as the Republican nominee, the importance of the free enterprise system was once again thrust onto America's political stage. The themes within the *Fun and Facts* series were prevalent once more, even if the cartoons themselves did not make a return. Unfortunately for Benson, the conditions that could have facilitated his return had come too late. At 82 years old, he was too old to champion the principles of free enterprise as he had done during the 1940s and 1950s. Instead, Benson revelled in his egotistical opinion, encouraged by Reagan, that during these turbulent years he was 'the only person in the country really coming out with a persistent voice for private enterprise and for big business.'[630]

Reagan's routine paeans to free enterprise echoed Benson's economic principles as they were, first and foremost, articulations of evangelicals' social and political aspirations. In the 1980s, as in the 1910s, 1930s, and 1950s, conservative evangelicals once again became advocates for the nation's business elite to advance their vision of a business-friendly, Christian

[630] Benson, cited in Robbie Maxwell, 'Educator to the Nation,' p. 262.

America.[631] As such, one of the main tenants of this thesis, the power of corporate-evangelical alliances in American conservatism, continued far beyond the decades pertaining to Sloan and Benson's relationship. In this instance, Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell led the way by exploiting the circumstances of the time – the economic anxieties of the 1970s, the courting of conservative politicians like Reagan, and the specific concerns of evangelicals over matters of desegregation, privatisation, sex, and religious right – and advocating for the protection of private enterprise. His rhetoric was orientated around results, technology, individualism, and corporatism.[632] Such activity arose most recently in the 2016 Presidential election in which more than 81% of the US's protestant evangelicals voted for Donald Trump, a controversial businessman with no prior experience in politics.[633] Moreover, the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby, provides an outstanding example of a modern connection between business and religion. In addition to supporting evangelical organisations and schools such as Oral Roberts University and Liberty University, the business was at the forefront of the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* Supreme Court decision. Here, the company was successful in their fight against federal regulations requiring that employer provided health insurance covered contraception, arguing that it violated their

[631] Darren Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 226.
[632] Ibid.
[633] 'Evangelicals and Trump – Lessons From the Nixon Era,' *The Conversation* [https://theconversation.com/evangelicals-and-trump-lessons-from-the-nixon-era-97974], accessed 20 March 2019.

religious freedom.[634] Corporate-evangelical alliances, therefore, remain significant to modern American conservatism.

Again, much of the latter half of the twentieth century is beyond the scope of this thesis and a deeper appreciation of the complexities of modern conservatism deserves further study elsewhere. Regardless, the reappearance of themes pertinent to the *Fun and Facts* series over the past several decades warrants at least a notable mention here. It is evident that, under the right circumstances, Benson's Americanism flourished. His reputation as an individual, however, was unrepairable meaning that *Fun and Facts* did not survive past the 1950s despite its later relevance.

These findings, reiterated in Maxwell's research, offer an interesting 'what next' in the aftermath of the *Fun and Facts* series, whilst coinciding with an overarching narrative of decline presented in the final chapter of this thesis. With the more positive accounts of Hicks and Stevens, earlier estimations of the project were optimistic. That was the case especially after the generous commentary of the series found in Hicks' *Sometimes in the Wrong*. However, the conclusions of this research demonstrate how the series diminished just as the production team found the perfect balance of education and humour to satisfy both cinematic and independent audiences. The fervent anti-Communist rhetoric in *Albert in Blunderland*, together with the perceived attacks on the farming industry in *Fresh Laid Plans*, did not sit well with viewers and sparked nation-wide controversy, despite their acceptance by MGM. The creative formula that propelled *Meet King Joe* to success was not transferred

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[634] 'Evangelicalism and Politics,' *The American Historian* [https://tah.oah.org/november-2018/evangelicalism-and-politics/], accessed 22 March 2018.

to these two features which, instead, served to disseminate the anti-New Deal and anti-Communist ideology of its creators, most notably Benson. The overtly propagandistic themes in the latter half of the series were not considered to be entertaining, nor educational, and the project gradually lost support from MGM and began to falter in educational circles. Whilst the postwar public welcomed the use of nontheatrical films in everyday life, there were many that continued to reject productions that clearly showcased the subjective interests of its producers. This was particularly prevalent in the final years of the 1950s with the end of the Red Scare hysteria and the decline of the New Deal. As the market for Benson's brand of free market Americanism diminished, the viewership for *Fun and Facts* was all of a sudden restricted to like-minded educational institutes, such as Pepperdine College, and the old generation of anti-New Deal industrialists.[635] When his free market ideals did resurface towards the end of the century, it was Benson who reclaimed a glimpse of his former success and not the *Fun and Facts* series itself.

That is not to say, however, that the *Fun and Facts* series was not at all successful. In fact, the first three cartoons achieved noteworthy praise and found audiences in both primary and secondary channels of distribution. Released between 1948 and 1949, these films benefitted from a renaissance of the nontheatrical film genre following the propaganda campaigns of the Second World War. As a medium that facilitated the victory of the Allies,

[635] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York, 2009), Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), and Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

nontheatrical films developed a heightened sense of respectability and witnessed a remarkable increase in production in the immediate postwar period. The *Fun and Facts* team recognised the power of this newfound popularity and worked to utilise the genre for their own gains. With the assistance of John Sutherland Productions, Sloan and Benson conceptualised their idea of Americanism through the use of high-end animation and advancements in Technicolour technology. The unique blend of bright and colourful cartoons, an economic education, and entertainment provided audiences with a change from the often dull, self-centred industrial films of the interwar years, during a time in which they demanded more from the short-form motion picture. Naturally, *Fun and Facts* gained the most attention from conservative circles and was featured in a range of articles written by right-wing authors. These publications, nonetheless, were to be found in both local and nation-wide outlets such as the *Los Angeles Herald & Express*, *Look Magazine*, and *The Motion Picture Herald*, ensuring that Harding's more successful features reached national attention. Though not for everyone, *Make Mine Freedom*, *Going Places*, and *Meet King Joe* received widespread praise for their innovative techniques in educating the public in the workings of the free enterprise system. As such, it is difficult to agree with Jack's assertion that the *Fun and Facts* team struggled – at least at first – to craft a highly persuasive product with wide popular appeal; that balanced education on the one hand and entertainment, particularly humour, on the other.[636]

[636] Caroline Jack, 'Fun and Facts about American Business: Economic Education and Business Propaganda in an Early Cold War Cartoon Series,' *Enterprise & Society* 16:3 (2015), p. 492.

With the initial success of the *Fun and Facts* series culminating in its eventual decline, it is clear that the project was very much a product of its time. The implementation of the New Deal during the 1930s provided corporate conservatives and their religious counterparts with a reason to believe their American way of life was under threat.[637] The hostile climate that arose in response to conservative agitation encouraged a plethora of public relations campaigns that sought to defend the principles of the free enterprise system against the growing power of the labour movement. It was a fight that involved the nation's most distinguished industrialists who often worked together through organisations such as the American Liberty League and the NAM, a group that was closely associated with Sloan and one that Benson easily infiltrated. Through their involvement in pro-business and free enterprise propaganda, Sloan and Benson gained valuable experiences, though not all of them successful, in disseminating their own brand of Americanism. Benson, who was deeply committed to both religious and economic education, relied on the funds of like-minded businessmen to produce high quality propaganda, whereas Sloan required a seemingly objective organisation of which he could privately fund to publicise his ideology. Upon recognising their separate needs, the two would eventually form a partnership based on their shared desire to restore the old order of limited government intervention in the economy. The

[637] Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our* Time (New York: Liveright, 2014), George Wolfskill, *The Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League, 1934–1940* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), and Matthew Avery Sutton, 'Was FDR the Antichrist? The Birth of Fundamentalist Antiliberalism in a Global Age,' *Journal of American History* 98:4 (2012), p. 1052 – 1074.

1930s may not have provided the ideal climate in which industrial propaganda could thrive, but it laid the foundation for what could be achieved in the future.

Armed with a renewed sense of optimism, the business community reignited their old feuds following America's victory in the Second World War. The economic conditions of the postwar period were unprecedented and the emergence of a consumer culture that relied heavily on mass production placed industry in a far greater position than that of the interwar years. With economic stability, public opinion towards big business improved significantly, despite the largest strike wave of the twentieth century occurring in the immediate aftermath of the war. The labour created a rift between employers and employees, yet a political shift to the right ensured management reaped the benefits of the ongoing strife. After intense lobbying, the business community succeeded in reversing the 1935 Wagner Act, the legislation responsible for an all-out war against the New Deal. The newly implemented Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 severely limited the influence of labour unions and shifted the power of balance back to management. It was a significant achievement for the business community, allowing it to reclaim its 1920s reputation, and signified the re-emergence of American conservatism. The ideological battles of the Cold War provided further ammunition for anti-New Dealers, who associated the Communist movement with FDR's policies in an attempt to keep it within the confines of the Depression. It is not surprising, therefore, that the postwar period provided the perfect conditions for an animated economic films series such as *Fun and Facts*.[638]

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[638] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003), Michael Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the*

However, whilst the timing was ideal for Sloan and Benson to embark on their ambitious propaganda project, societal changes in the latter half of the 1950s instigated the series' decline. In a nation far removed from the conditions of the Depression, the New Deal was seemingly outdated. There was no longer a need for Sloan and Benson's fervent opposition to its policies, especially after the Taft-Hartley Act reversed the very legislation they sought to overthrow. Furthermore, the ending of the Korean War, together with the downfall of McCarthy, greatly subdued anti-Communist tensions throughout the country. This was so much the case that by the 1960s, the conservative movement sought to distance itself from staunch anti-Communists such as Benson. The *Fun and Facts* series, therefore, was best suited to early years of the long-1950s.

Outside of the substance of the series itself, it is clear that the project was successful in maintaining the longevity of Sloan and Benson's corporate-evangelical alliance. As well as exploring the success of *Fun and Facts* as an educational production, this thesis sought to provide an analysis of a surprisingly overlooked partnership between two leading conservative figures of the New Deal era. Although it is difficult to locate the exact date of their meeting, it is known that Sloan and Benson worked together, with relative ease, from 1945 – 1954. Their ideas for the series, together with the motives behind their actions, often challenged this seemingly perfect partnership by highlighting the differences between them. Sloan, who fought to have the

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Republic Party (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945 – 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

series circulated to the widest possible audience in order to improve public opinion of big business, regularly agreed with MGM's demands for distribution, whereas Benson placed his efforts exclusively in the realm of economic education with a Christian focus. Nevertheless, both parties settled their differences without disrupting the production of the project. The desire to disseminate their free enterprise ideology ultimately kept this alliance alive, allowing scholars to place it within the wider historiography of twentieth century business and religious activism. Despite its eventual decline, therefore, the *Fun and Facts* series is a fine example of the result of a successful corporate-evangelical alliance that arose in response to the New Deal, with its initial success demonstrating the power of American conservativism in the immediate postwar period.

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